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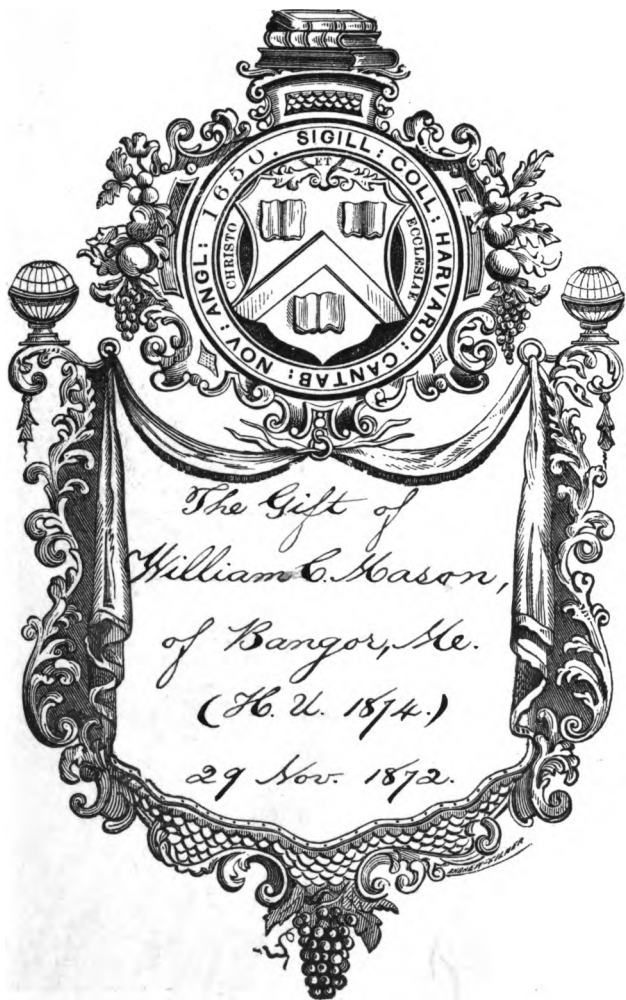
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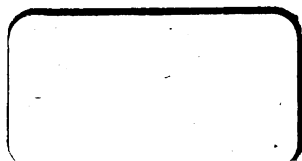
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HD WIDENER



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LETTERS TO THE YOUNG.

BY
MARIA JANE JEWSBURY.

No, though arrived at all the world can aim
This is the mark and glory of our frame—
A soul capacious of the Deity.

WALLER.

From the Third London Edition.

✓
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TO THE
VALUED FRIEND
WHO SUGGESTED THE PUBLICATION OF THIS VOLUME,
IT IS NOW
AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED.

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TO THE FIRST EDITION.

THE following Letters comprise a real, and not fictitious correspondence. They are the fruit of a protracted recovery from long illness ; and are published with a chastened hope, that although originally designed for individual characters and cases, they may admit of a less restricted application.

M. J. J.

May 1, 1828.

ADVERTISEMENT

TO THE THIRD EDITION.

THE Author would almost deem it impertinent to prefix another Advertisement to these Letters, did she not feel anxious to thank those who have shown so much indulgence to so slight a work ; did she not also wish to give expression to a hope that when she next solicits their attention, it may be for some production less desultory, and more matured.

In this edition, letters xxv. xxvi. xxvii. are new ; the whole have been revised ; and, as a not inappropriate conclusion, the Author has appended a poem originally published without her name.

January, 1832.

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LETTERS TO THE YOUNG.

LETTER I.

MY DEAREST —,

You ask me to recommend you books, and some time or other I will name a few that it may be for your advantage to peruse ; my object at present, is to gain your pre-eminent attention to one, because that one in its two characters, as a book, and as the book of God, is pre-eminent in its claims. It is respecting its human and literary character that I shall first address you.

Some works we read and lay aside without even the intention of reading them again ; they are not worth the trouble, or we have more important demands on our leisure and attention. Some there are, which, having

read, we refer to afterwards for particular passages and expressions, otherwise their office is fulfilled, and we think of them no more. There remains a third class of books, small indeed, but far more valued by us; books that we study, and make our companions, returning to them again and again, with increased confidence and undiminished zest.

Most readers have two or three authors whom they thus estimate as standards—whose writings have tended to model and mature their minds, whom it pains them to hear depreciated, to understand and to love whom, supplies a bond of union something like that which the knowledge of a third person affords to strangers. Now this feeling ought, in its highest degree, to obtain for the Bible.

If to you, or any other young person of an ardent, inquiring turn of mind, fond of knowledge, somewhat for its own sake, somewhat more for its estimation, I were to say, “Some writings have just been found in Herculaneum, the discovery of which will form an epoch in the annals of literature;”—such an address

would insure your eager attention. If I proceeded to say, "The portions already decyphered, contain notices of habits, manners, individuals, and even nations, the very name and remembrance of which are extinct : and also inform us of events antecedent to the date of any other known records ;—they supply several points in history and chronology, which the learned have vainly sought elsewhere ; and enable us to disprove a thousand fables which we must otherwise have been content to receive as truth ; added to which, they exhibit specimens of the higher branches of composition, unparalleled in any other productions, ancient or modern ; and some monarch's library, or some national museum, is destined to become the sole possessor of this literary treasure ;"—at this point of my address, you would certainly begin to lament the impossibility of your ever obtaining a glimpse of these inestimable writings ; you would sigh to be rich and learned, that before you died you might travel to examine this world's wonder. But if I were to say instead, "These writings are all that I have represented, only with us they are so cheap and common, that

you, and I, and every one we know, possess a copy of them," you would interrupt me, and reply with a look and tone of disappointment, "You mean the BIBLE!" Yes, my dear —, I do mean the Bible; and it is no slight proof of the perverseness of our nature, that we so little study and so lightly regard, in the sacred volume, the very beauties which, when discovered in the works of our fellow-mortals, we reverence even to idolatry. I speak now of the Bible as a book; and I speak of it as such, to you a young person. Tell me then, why the beautiful composition therein contained, should excite less interest, merely from its connection with pure and solemn truth? Why easiness of access, and facility of comprehension, should derogate from literary merit? Why figures, and epithets, and harmony of language,—why narrative, and poetry, and history, and allegory, should delight you less than similar, or perhaps as regards the structure, the self-same things elsewhere? I am not afraid to speak decidedly, because in another letter I shall faithfully press upon you the devotional study of the Bible; that, for which it was primarily

given ; that, in fact, for which it was given at all. I will say then the intellectual study of the Bible is also most important, and to young persons enthusiastic in their estimation of talent, absolutely indispensable ; as affording a salutary check to high-minded opinions of human intellect, by showing that "wherein men have dealt proudly, God is above them." Have they poured forth strains, which at the close of tens of centuries, are fresh and vigorous as the sun that rose this morning in his strength, or the dews that last night refreshed the flowers ? Such has HE inspired—

"The lasting Iliads have not lived so long."*

Have they opened the fountain of the heart, unlocked the source of tears, or called forth

* Waller, in his second canto "On Divine Poesy," has the following lines on the song of Deborah.

"Heaven to the pious did this art reveal,
And from their store succeeding poets steal ;
Homer's Scamander for the Trojans fought,
And, swelled so high, by her old Kishon taught ;
The host of heaven, his Phœbus and his Mars,
He arms, instructed by her fighting stars.
Truth she relates in a sublimer strain,
Than all the tales the boldest Greeks could feign ;
For what she sung that spirit did indite,
Which gave her courage and success in fight."

2 *

feelings that lie yet deeper? Have they elevated the imagination, enriched the understanding, strengthened the judgment? Have they portrayed heroism, alike in the power of valor, and the tenderness of affection? Have they illustrated character, developed the springs of action, revealed to man the little world within his bosom? So has HE. But comparison implies equality, and how much more has HE done! In some of the most admired human compositions, these graces of style and structure have formed the ultimate and only triumph; they have been accounted sufficient, though but adjuncts to fiction and imposture. It is not so with the Scriptures. Literary enjoyment is there combined with a sense of safety; with a confidence, that intellectually, no less than religiously, we are not following "cunningly devised fables;" that the heroes actually existed; that the saints were indeed what they are described; that the sages spoke the wisdom recorded as their words; that even the oriental hyperboles are rather the ornaments than the exaggerations of truth.

This imparts peculiar solemnity to the

imaginative parts of the Bible, and reminds me of Cowley's remark, that "there is not so great a falsehood in any poet, as the vulgar conceit of men, that lying is essential to good poetry." This great writer had a fine sense of the literary value of the Scriptures, and though I shall never ask you to read his "Davideis," I beg your attention to the following extract from his preface.

"What can we imagine more proper for the ornaments of wit or learning in the story of Deucalion, than in that of Noah? Why will not the actions of Samson afford as plentiful matter as the labors of Hercules? Why is not Jephtha's daughter as good a woman as Iphigenia? And the friendship of David and Jonathan, more worthy celebration than that of Theseus and Besethous? Does not the passage of Moses and the Israelites into the Holy Land, yield incomparably more poetical variety than the voyages of Ulysses or Eneas? Are the obsolete thread-bare tales of Thebes and Troy, half so stored with great, historical, and supernatural actions, as the wars of Joshua, of the Judges, and of divers others? Can all the

transformations of the gods give such copious hints to flourish and expatiate on, as the true miracles of Christ, or of his prophets and apostles ? ”

Do not, my dear ——, suppose, from what I have said and quoted, that I would hazard the unguarded assertion, that no beautiful composition exists out of the Bible ; or that its pages contain examples of every beauty ; or that every casual resemblance in a human author must necessarily be a copy from the sacred ones. Still less would I assume, that independent of containing all things needful to salvation, they contain all that are desirable for information. Nevertheless, I have a very high idea of what the Bible, as a book, is able to do for man as an intellectual being ; and I never read our standard authors (Shakespeare in particular) without a vivid impression that their perusal of the Bible was more than occasional, and their obligations to it far from slight. Indeed, I think, that in England we can never ascertain exactly how far these obligations extend. A child's first reading lessons are generally selected from this book, and if, in after life, he neglect it,

he yet hears large portions read in public worship, and thus unconsciously imbibes a general impression of scriptural sentiment and phraseology. There may be gross ignorance as to doctrinal truth, deficient acquaintance with the historical arrangement, and yet a feeling of familiarity—difficult to lose, and otherwise impossible to account for.

The free perusal of the Scriptures, as restored by the Reformation, had more than a remote influence upon English literature; it was at once a cause and an earnest of the intellectual splendor which marked the Elizabethan era. "I cannot think" (says an author not noted for his reverence of sacred things) "that all this variety and weight of knowledge could be thrown in, all at once, upon the mind of a people, and not make some impression upon it, the traces of which might be discerned in the manners and literature of the age. For, to leave more disputable points, and take only the historical parts of the Old Testament, and the moral sentiments of the New, there is nothing like them in the power of exciting awe and admiration, or of riveting sympathy. We see

what Milton has made of the account of the creation, from the manner in which he has treated it, imbued and impregnated with the spirit of the time of which we speak. Or, what is there for romantic interest and patriarchal simplicity, equal to the story of Joseph and his Brethren, of Rachel and Jacob, of Jacob's Dream, of Ruth and Boaz, the descriptions in the book of Job, the deliverance of the Jews out of Egypt, or the account of their captivity and return from Babylon? There is in all these parts of Scripture, and numberless more of the same kind, (to pass over the orphic hymns of David, the prophetic denunciations of Isaiah, or the gorgeous visions of Ezekiel,) an originality, a vastness of conception, a depth and tenderness of feeling, and a touching simplicity in the mode of narration, which he who does not feel, must be made of 'no penetrable stuff.' There is something in the character of Christ, (leaving religious faith quite out of the question,) of more sweetness and majesty, and more likely to work a change in the mind of man, by the contemplation of an idea alone, than in any to be found in history, actual or feigned."

Personally speaking, I must confess myself jealous of the homage rendered to productions of human genius, unless similar, or rather preponderating homage be paid to that work "which has God for its author." I never, in my general reading, exceedingly admire any poetical thoughts or figures, any instances of noble feeling, or fine illustrations of character, without looking whether the pages of the Bible do not contain something similar. This habit I strongly advise you to adopt. It will familiarize your mind with the minutiae of Scripture; heighten your interest in its perusal, and your estimation of its worth; whilst, far more frequently than a careless reader can imagine, you will attain your immediate object. To those who search for beauties, as to those who search for truth, that verse may be applied—"Every one that seeketh findeth." Your favorite "Elements of Criticism" has one fault which, independent of every other, is sufficient to destroy my complacency towards the work. Instances of fine composition are selected from writers of all kinds, ancient and modern, who are applauded without limit, whilst not above

half a dozen quotations are made from the Scriptures, and those accompanied with faint or dubious praise. I know that you are just now enraptured with Ossian, and I have no wish to disturb your delight in the bard of the clouds; only when you have admired Fingal to the utmost, and completed your enthusiasm with Reevesden's engraving of him, let me beg you to examine the character of David considered merely as one of the *heroic* race. Nay, I will go further and say, that if you institute the comparison between David and the Homeric chiefs, or with any recorded in classic and chivalrous history, or immortalized in romance and song, you will find none so perfect as a hero. Separate him altogether from the prophet and the saint, and regard him simply as a warrior who lived at a period when war was the occupation of life, and personal prowess the sole distinction of character. And what do you find? At the outset you have realized romance in the ruddy shepherd boy, called from his songs and his sheep to be anointed to a crown. You have the daring of valor in his fearless combat with Goliath, and its simplicity in his

unboasting conquest; whilst his minstrelsy in the court of Saul, his marriage with that monarch's daughter, the first and last days of his friendship with the princely Jonathan, his chivalrous generosity of spirit in contrast with the cold, mean, settled hatred of his persecutor, suggest a thousand pictures to the heart and imagination. Examine him then in his wanderings, and in his subsequent prosperity as king of Israel;—you will find the heroic traits still strong upon his character. Observe his forbearance under injuries, which, united with power to avenge them, was unexampled as opinions and manners were then constituted. Mark his readiness to acknowledge the merit of an opponent, proved by his expressions concerning Saul, Abner, and Ishbosheth; his recollection of kindness long since past—witness his embassy to Hanun;—his munificence of spirit and complete freedom from sordid selfishness—witness his law, that all who tarried by the stuff should share like those that went down to the battle;—his sending, from his private portion of the spoil of the Amalekites, presents to all whom he “and his men were wont

to haunt ;” and his anxiety to prevent Ittai the Gittite joining him in his flight from Absalom, because he “was a stranger and an exile.” His refusal to drink the water, which, prompted by his urgent desire, the three mighty men brake through the host of the Philistines to draw from the well of Bethlehem, is another fine instance of generous self-denial ; finer even than that recorded of Sir Philip Sydney, because connected with noble contrition for his former want of self-government. “He poured it out to the Lord, and said, My God forbid it me, that I should do this thing : shall I drink the blood of these men that have put their lives in jeopardy ? for with the jeopardy of their lives they brought it. Therefore he would not drink it.” Perhaps, however, the instance in which David manifested the loftiest spirit, that which combined in itself most of the elements of true greatness, was the kingly offering he made out of his own proper goods to the service of that temple he was forbidden to build, renouncing at the same moment all credit for his munificence. “Who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to offer so

willingly after this sort ? for all things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee." But David was not merely a "mighty man of valor ;" he possessed qualities it was impossible any heathen could possess, and which were his, solely by virtue of his knowledge of the true God. It is this remarkable union of contrary endowments which renders his heroic character so perfect. Comparing him with other heroes of old, though acknowledging all their bravery and all their force of mind, we may alter the words of Manfred, and say, that David had—

"Not these alone, but with them gentler powers ;
Pity, and smiles, and tears, which they had not ;
And gentleness—but that they had for some,
Humility—and that they never had."

I must confess for myself, that the historical books of the Old Testament are so exquisitely interesting, that I almost think I gather more instruction from the perusal of them, than from parts more immediately abounding in precept. In this respect I am a child. They have too, as histories, one point of interest peculiar to themselves. Doubtless the passions, the miseries, and the strifes of earth,

are therein recorded in their most painful forms ; but still they are continually relieved by incidents and characters of a contrary nature, which breathe around them a soothing and heavenly influence, like that which the harp of David produced upon the mind of Saul. It may be only a simple casual occurrence which appears to drop by accident from the writer's pen—as that Jehoiada the priest was buried “in the city of David, among the kings, because he had done good in Israel, both toward God, and toward his house”—or that David, when an outcast in the wilderness, said to the king of Moab, “let my father and my mother, I pray thee, come forth and be with you, till I know what God will do for me ;” or that Jacob, when arranging his household to go forth to meet Esau, placed, with the providence of the heart, “Rachel and Joseph hindermost.” It may be some slight and single touch, like the same patriarch's dying allusion to the death of his unforgotten Rachel, “when yet there was but a little way to come unto Ephrath ;” some fact fraught with pathos, like Rizpah's watching the dead bodies of her sons, suffering neither

“ the birds of the air to rest on them by day, nor the beasts of the field by night ; ” or some trait of loyal love, some proof of grateful constancy, like that of the noble Jabesh-gileadites, who mindful only of former favors, arose by night, rescued from the hands of the Philistines the mutilated remains of Saul and of his sons, and then buried them under a tree in their own land, with fasting, and with tears.

These may appear slight things to mention, but they are not therefore unworthy of notice ; they refresh the feelings, suggest reflections, give momentary glimpses of the treasures hidden in the human heart, cold, and dark, and earthly as it is. A thousand such are scattered through the sacred volume, without effort, without design ; the seed-pearls of truth, the diamond dust of nature.

My remarks have however extended themselves so far, that I must reserve the conclusion for another letter. Believe me, meanwhile,

Fondly and faithfully yours.

LETTER II.

MY DEAREST —,

- SCHLEGEL, speaking of the poetic portions of the Bible, says without reserve, "These writings form a fiery and godlike fountain of inspiration, of which the greatest of modern poets have never been weary of drinking ; which has suggested to them their noblest images, and animated them for their sublimest flights." I wish, in the present letter, to show you some of these remarkable coincidences ; and to prove, that many of our most admired figures and expressions are either derived from the Scriptures, or may at least be found there ; if not in their extended and complete development, unquestionably in their germ, their principle, and their outline. Frequently too, this may be said with

equal truth of incidents and characters. The similarity between Ahab and Macbeth, between Jezebel and Lady Macbeth, and a parallel resemblance in their style of action, has always struck me exceedingly. The portrait of Macbeth, when matured in villany,

“ Bloody,
Luxurious, avaricious, false, deceitful,
Sudden, malicious, smacking of every sin
That has a name,”

precisely describes Ahab ; every epithet might be proved by an action. Nevertheless, the excess of wickedness is in both instances to be charged on the influence of their respective wives ; who, bolder in mind, and blacker in heart than themselves, became their teachers and tempters in sin. The resemblance between the queens is even more perfect. Both were filled “ from the crown to the toe, top-full of direst cruelty,” mingled with a spirit of “ pure demoniac firmness,” which knew not, or, if it knew, heeded not the relentings of nature. Their minds were compact and integral ; they contained no opposing principle which might impede their progress in evil or embitter success ; so that murder it-

self, when apparently necessary to the attainment of an object, was consonant, not contrary to their nature. It was not so with their lords, who, in comparison with each "fiendlike queen," were

"Full o' the milk of human kindness."

Ahab evidenced this after his victory over the Syrians. Benhadad, to whom he had formerly been a vassal, then sent ambassadors to him girded with sackcloth, and with ropes, on their heads, to petition for his life, and Ahab said, "Is he yet alive? he is my brother;"—and "he made a covenant with him, and sent him away."

Again: It was by yielding to the delusions of the "weird sisters" that Macbeth laid the foundation of his after crimes and sorrows; their spells and promises clouded his mind like emanations from the pit of darkness, which needed but the influence of his wife to quicken into substantial evil. So it was with Ahab: he too sought to wizards, and them that had evil spirits; "and did sell himself to work wickedness in the sight of the Lord whom Jezebel his wife stirred up."

In the grand crime of each, the murder of Naboth and of Duncan, the parallel is minute and unbroken. Macbeth, who was only a Thane, coveted "the golden round of sovereignty." Ahab, who, already a king, had no need to desire a crown, was disquieted for a neighbor's vineyard; a proof, by the way, how little it is the intrinsic worth of an object which regulates the desires of an unsanctified heart. Both "would wrongly win," yet in the first instance would "not play false;" one took his disappointment in sullen silence, the other was almost persuaded to rest satisfied as Glamis and Cawdor. Then appear the master spirits. Lady Macbeth thus taunts her hesitating Thane, and with the hardihood of guilt without fear, develops the purpose which he has desired without conceiving:—

" Art thou afeard

To be the same in thine own act and valor,
As thou art in desire? Wouldst thou have that
Which thou esteem'st the ornament of life,
And live a coward in thine own esteem;
Letting I dare not, wait upon I would?

Macb. If we should fail——

Lady M.

We fail!

But screw your courage to the sticking place,

And we'll not fail. When Duncan is asleep,
(Whereto the rather shall his hard day's journey
Soundly invite him,) his two chamberlains
Will I with wine and wassel so convince,
That memory, the warder of the brain,
Shall be a fume, and the receipt of reason
A limbeck only. When in swinish sleep
Their drenched natures lie, as in a death,
What cannot you and I perform upon
The unguarded Duncan? What not put upon
His spungy officers; who shall bear the guilt
Of our great quell?"

Precisely in this spirit does Jezebel address Ahab:—"Dost thou now govern the kingdom of Israel? arise, and eat bread, and let thine heart be merry: I will give thee the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite. So she wrote letters in Ahab's name, and sealed them with his seal, and sent the letters unto the elders, and to the nobles that were in his city, dwelling with Naboth; and she wrote in the letters, saying, Proclaim a fast, and set Naboth on high among the people: and set two men, sons of Belial, before him, and bear witness against him, saying, Thou didst blaspheme God and the king; and then carry him out, and stone him, that he may die." The two monarchs resemble each other in their closing scenes. As dangers increase,

and the hope of repulsing his enemies diminishes, Macbeth clings with desperate faith to the words of those who "paltered with him in a double sense ;"—and Ahab, seduced by false prophets, goes up against Ramoth-Gilead, where destruction awaits him. The frenzy with which the former receives the messengers who bring tidings of the enemy's approach, corresponds with the hatred which the latter expresses for Micaiah, the true prophet, "who did not prophesy good concerning him, but evil." Ahab and Macbeth resemble each other also in the brave spirit which flashes forth just before the end of life ; a last ray of kingliness in one, and a burst of old knightly feeling in the other.

Macbeth. -

I'll not yield

To kiss the ground before young Malcolm's feet,
And to be baited by the rabble's curse,
Though Birnam wood be come to Dunsinane,
And thou opposed, being of no woman born,
Yet I will try the last.

"And Ahab said to his chariot-man, Turn thine hand, that thou mayest carry me out of the host, for I am wounded. And the battle increased that day ; howbeit the king of Israel stayed himself up in his chariot against the

Syrians until the even; and about the time of the sunsetting he died." Their queens also died in a resembling spirit; one, having "painted her face and tired her head," is killed with scoffing on her lips; the other expires without one "compunctious visiting," which might prove that remembrance at last awoke remorse.

Let me now direct your attention to an individual scene in the same tragedy, and a Scripture narrative,—the announcement to Macduff, of the murder of his family; and to David, of the death of Absalom. The spirit and construction are essentially the same, and it is interesting to see how closely a first-rate production of art approximates to the simplicity of nature. The transcendent dramatist has only been natural; the simple narrator of events has been dramatic. Both represent a bereaved parent, and that parent's grief, in heart-broken, heart-breaking words. When the watchman reports the approach of Ahimâaz, and David replies, "He is a good man, and cometh with good tidings," we have one of the subtlest springs of human nature touched without design.

Yet who does not know the operation of that principle which hopes or fears according to the medium by which intelligence is conveyed, and again reflects back upon that medium the precise feeling which the intelligence has excited? Shakspeare gives a fine illustration of this in another place, where he makes Constance say to the bearer of ill tidings—

“Thy news hath made thee a most ugly man.”

Then follows another of those delicate touches which go home and instantly to the heart. Of each succeeding messenger David asks but one question, for his soul knows but one anxiety; it concerns not the battle, though upon that is his crown depending—but “Is the young man Absalom safe?” In the history and the tragedy, the messengers alike give evasive replies in the first instance, and the sufferers are represented as guessing the truth before they hear it. David more unkinged by grief than by his son’s rebellion, rose from his place, and “went up to the chamber above the gate;” he asked no further question, desired no other intelligence, and craved

no royal privilege, save the privilege to weep alone. His people were gathering round—those who had saved and those who had injured him;—the din of battle and the shout of victory were in his ear;—he saw, and heard, but heeded not, for his soul was gone forth to Absalom, cut off in the full blossom of his iniquities—to Absalom, his beautiful and brave—“and the victory that day was turned into mourning.” His recovered crown, his re-established throne, were vain comforters for his lost child—for him, of whom, as he went up to his chamber, he wept and said, “O my son Absalom! my son, my son Absalom! would to God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!” In David we see the monarch forgotten in the father; in Macduff, after the first paroxysm of sorrow, the husband and father become merged in the warrior, who resolves to make him “medicines of his great revenge.” This is characteristic, but had both been poetic imaginations, we cannot doubt which would have been considered of the highest order. One other observation on this passage. In David mourning over Absalom, one would think

that pathos reached its climax ; but it does not till the subsequent chapter, where his grief is rebuked by the imperious Joab ; and at the suggestion (command, more properly) of the slayer of his son, he goes again, to sit in the gate, "speak comfortably unto his servants," and seem to forget his child. With this assumed self-control, and real submission to the will of others, remember that David was a "lion-like man ;" one, whom his own soldiers had pronounced "the light of Israel."

Lord Byron's descriptive apostrophe* to Rome, as "the Niöbe of nations,"—"childless and crownless in her voiceless wo,"—"a marble wilderness,"—and "lone mother of dead empires,"—is in its primary idea, of a decayed kingdom personified as a "woman forsaken and grieved in spirit," but an eloquent paraphrase of the opening of Lamentations : "How doth the city sit solitary, that was full of people ! how is she become as a widow ! she that was great among the nations, and princess among the provinces, how is she become tributary ! she weepeth sore in the night, and her tears are on her

* *Childe Harold*, canto iv. stanzas 77, 78.

cheeks : among all her lovers she hath none to comfort her : all her friends have dealt treacherously with her ; they are become her enemies."

Again. I know you greatly admire the same poet's "Ode to Napoleon." Do so ; but admire also Isaiah's ode on the fall of Sennacherib, the Napoleon of Babylon ; and observe too, that independent of a general resemblance throughout in point of structure, Lord Byron's first and finest stanza is altogether derived from the prophet.

" 'Tis past,—but yesterday a king,
And armed with kings to strive,
And now, thou art a nameless thing ;
So abject, yet alive !
Is this the man of thousand thrones,
Who strewed our earth with hostile bones,
And can he thus survive ?
Since he, miscalled the morning star,
No man, nor fiend, hath fallen so far."

"He who smote the people in wrath with a continual stroke, is persecuted and none hindereth. How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning ! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken nations ! They that see thee shall narrowly

look upon thee, and consider thee, saying, Is this the man that made the earth to tremble; that did shake kingdoms; that made the world as a wilderness?"*

The chariot of Carmala in Southey's "Kehama," will remind you of Ezekiel's sublime vision of the wheels and cherubims: and the "winged hands, armless and bodiless," which bear the magic globe into the cave of Lornite, will also remind you of the hand which brought the roll of a book to the prophet, and of the hands which he discerned beneath the wings of the cherubims.

The mantles—

"White

As the swan's breast, and bright as mountain snow,"

in which Kailyal and Ladurlad are arrayed, as alone enabling them to pass the fiery flood which interposes between them and the throne of Yamen, will suggest to you the scripture metaphors of "the wedding garment," and the "fine linen, clean and white, which is the righteousness of the saints." In one of the prose passages of this fervent,

* Isaiah xiv.

and golden-hearted historian as well as poet, the crowning charm lies in a descriptive phrase which frequently occurs in the Bible. —*“ As the soldiers were carrying him (Sir John Moore) slowly along, he made them frequently turn round, that he might see the field of battle, and listen to the firing, and he was well pleased when the sound grew fainter. A spring wagon came up, bearing Colonel Wynch, who was wounded: the Colonel asked who was in the blanket, and being told it was Sir John Moore, wished him to be placed in the wagon. Sir John asked one of the Highlanders whether he thought the wagon or the blanket was the best? and the man said, the blanket would not shake him so much, as he and the other soldiers would keep the step, and carry him easy. So they proceeded with him to his quarters, at Corunna, *weeping as they went.*”

“And David went up by the ascent of Mount Olivet, and wept as he went up, and had his head covered, and he went barefoot: and all the people that was with him covered

* Southey's Peninsular War.

every man his head, and they went up, weeping as they went up." 2 Samuel xv. 30.

Campbell's expression—

"Her march is on the mountain wave,
Her home is on the deep ;"

will remind you of the Psalmist's—"Thy path is in the sea, and thy footsteps in the great deep." When a poet said that the Apollo Belvidere appears to have shot the arrow "less by an effort than a command," he expressed a noble idea, worthy the transcendent statue : but when Habakkuk says of the Holy One, "He stood—and measured the earth ; he beheld—and drave asunder the nations," the sublime conception of power exercised by the mere movement of *will*, is carried to a height worthy the true and living God—the God of heaven ! Young well expresses the same style of sentiment :

"Whose word was Nature's birth,
The shadow of whose hand is Nature's shield,
Her dissolution, his suspended smile."

But the grand treasure-house for thoughts of this order, is the Old Testament : "Thou openest thine hand, they are filled with good ; thou hidest thy face, they are troubled ; thou

takest away their breath, they die and return to their dust ; thou sendest forth thy Spirit, they are created ; and thou renewest the face of the earth. The glory of the Lord shall endure for ever ; the Lord shall rejoice in his works. He looketh on the earth, and it trembleth ; he toucheth the hills, and they smoke.”*

Washington Irving says of the oak, that it “ assimilates in the grandeur of its attributes to heroic and intellectual man ; and is an emblem of what a nobleman should be—a refuge for the weak, a shelter for the oppressed, and a defence for the defenceless ; warding off from them the peltings of the storm, or the scorching rays of arbitrary power.”—A fine similitude, but not, surely, finer than the prophet’s : “ The tree that thou sawest, which grew and was strong ; whose height reached unto heaven, and the sight thereof to all the earth ; whose leaves were fair, and the fruit thereof much, and in it was meat for all ; under which the beasts of the field dwelt, and upon whose branches the fowls of the

* Psalm civ.

heaven had their habitation. It is thou, O king, that art grown and become strong.”*

You will find the same metaphor in the thirty-first of Ezekiel, only there it is carried through the chapter, and forms a sustained and splendid allegory.

Lord Byron’s “Darkness,” and Campbell’s “Last Man,” striking as they are; even Shakspeare’s description of the “cloud-capt towers, and gorgeous palaces,” passing away “like the baseless fabric of a vision,” may bring to mind, but cannot for one moment compare with the following passages, for lonely desolate grandeur: “I beheld the earth, and lo, it was without form and void; and the heavens, and they had no light. I beheld the mountains, and lo, they trembled, and all the hills moved lightly. I beheld, and lo, there was no man; and all the birds of the heaven were fled. I beheld, and lo, the fruitful place was a wilderness; and all the cities thereof were broken down at the presence of the Lord, and by his fierce anger.”† “And the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her

* Daniel iv. 21, 22.

† Jeremiah iv. 23—27.

untimely figs when she is shaken of a mighty wind. And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together ; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places. And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free-man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains ; and said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb.”* But I must check myself : to notice every similarity, still more every scriptural beauty, would swell my letter to a volume.

If the hints I have thrown out, give you a new motive to read with increased interest and attention, you will discover beauties for yourself, and in that discovery find a rich reward. Do not suppose I wish to chill the ardent admiration which all, but especially young minds, feel for the productions of human genius :—admire the Scriptures first, last, most, and then admire other works how you will. Neither do I wish to make

* Revelation vi. 13—17,

you affect criticism, or delight in theories, or consider the devotion of sentiment more than the devotion of principle ; or confound a religious taste, with a taste for true religion. My simple desire is, that you should not be a literary Persian, adoring the orb of human genius, whilst forgetful of Him who bids it shine ; but a Christian, one who fears God before he honors man. To this end, I entreat you to drink reverentially, deeply, constantly, at that unsealed fountain of glory, wisdom, beauty, and power,—the eternal Word of God. Then, I will trust you to wander at will amongst the writings of mere mortals ; for you will then bear about with you a talisman of truth, an armor of strength, a new sense for enjoyment, which will reveal to you their errors, defend you from their assaults, enhance and purify their worth. Trying all principles by scripture principles, elevating that one book as the moral standard by which all others are to be judged—as the sun, from their proximity to which, they can alone derive their glory—you will read nothing without profit.* His-

* Of course this assertion is not made of works decidedly immoral or frivolous.

tory, poetry, narrative, all will speak to you of God. Evil men and evil deeds will confirm and elucidate his descriptions of the heart by nature ; whilst such as are " lovely and of good report," will be referred to their true source, even " the riches of the glory of his grace, by whom are all things, and without whom nothing is strong, nothing is holy." Characters and qualities opposed to the gospel of Jesus Christ, will gradually lose their lustre, and cease to attract admiration or excite sympathy. You will learn that no plant of intellectual renown can long flourish in the soil of moral depravity ;—your mind's vision will be purified to discern the analogy which subsists between the principles which give permanence to genius, and those which ennoble and invigorate the soul. As you take a religious, you will take a refined view of intellectual creations ; glaring qualities, you will no longer mistake for great ones, nor be reconciled to what is shallow, merely because it may chance to be sparkling. You will regard the materials of which character is composed, more than the endowments that may gild and embroider its surface. The

storms of passion, the wild beatings of ungoverned sensibility, and the reckless energies of impulse, will be recognized as what they really are—attractions of a second-rate and vulgar cast. They will shrink before “the greatness of principle,” and appear “poor and low, compared with the magnanimity of virtue.” I say not that the intellectual study of the Scriptures will, of itself, induce this calm and sober, yet withal, this lofty temperament; but if combined with their devotional use, and that, as the habit of a heart, the desire of a soul, seeking after truth that the truth may make it free—then the results I have described are not exaggerated.

Oh! dearest —, when I think of you, in this sweet season of youth, my heart yearns over you with the tender solicitude of one who can be young as you no more. Shall it be in vain? Will you give your affections, yet unmarked by a scar, to a world that will only wither them with its pleasures, or crush them beneath its cares? that pretends not to offer a blessing or a joy able to endure the touch of time, or shield the soul from sorrow? that has no heritage beyond the ever-changing

present ; no glory that is not founded in vanity, and doomed to destruction ? whose votaries, when they have loved, served, flattered, worshipped, sacrificed, through life, ask forgetfulness as a last boon, and even that boon, ask in vain ? Will you surrender your mind, with all its budding energies, your sensibility yet in its spring-bloom, to the literature of that world which heeds not the serpent and its sting, if the flowers that hide them be but fair ? No ! dearest —, you will not call the restraints which religion imposes on youth and on genius, other than an easy yoke, which it is their glory and happiness to wear. You will not cast aside your Bible as a dull book, commanding and connected with duller duties ; the perusal of it will not be the task-work and penance of some lonely hour of which conscience is the angry ruler ; you will rather esteem it your mind's pleasure-garden, an intellectual Eden, containing what is " good for food, and pleasant to the eyes, and to be desired to make one wise ;" whilst the Tree of Life towers in the midst, neither barred off by prohibition, nor guarded by flaming sword. Whether

reading for your soul's profit, or your mind's pleasure, you will continually exclaim, with Tertullian, "I adore the fullness of the Scriptures."

I remain, my dearest —,
Yours.

LETTER III.

I COME now, my dearest —, to speak of the Bible as the book of God. If it is the wonder of heaven to be independent of that book, it is the glory of earth to possess it. If the “spirits of the just made perfect” are admitted to behold the face of God, we, through the medium of the Scriptures, may even here understand somewhat of his character : if they are received into his glory, we may be led by his counsel.

But who, alas ! beholding the gross neglect or wandering attention the Scriptures generally receive, would imagine that the possession of them was any privilege ! that they contained the revelation of “the mystery hid from ages and generations,” and still with-

held from many nations and people ; that they, and they only, made known to us “ the way of peace ! ”

And yet as far as our species is concerned, we may say, one sun ! one Bible ! Shut that awfully-glorious book, blot from the human memory all we have learnt from its pages, and it is as though you quenched the day-spring !—the whole world lieth in darkness ! To guilty miserable man there remains no God !—no heaven !—no guide in life !—no support in affliction !—no victory over death ! the grave becomes a fathomless abyss, and eternity spreads round him like the ocean, dark, illimitable, fearful ! Open the Bible again,—the sun is restored, and with it, life, glory, gladness, and strength ! If all the minds now on earth could be concentrated into one, and that one applied the whole of its stupendous energies to the study of this single book, it would never apprehend its doctrines in all their divine purity ; its promises in their overpowering fullness ; its precepts in their searching extent ;—even that glorious mind, sufficient to exhaust the universe, would only discover that the Scriptures were in-

exhaustible. It is sad to contrast our indifference towards the sacred volume; with the ardent love manifested by the Old Testament saints, who had but a little portion of it, and that little closely veiled. We may perhaps think with envy of the visions vouchsafed to them, forgetful, that Abraham, who was called the friend of God, Jacob, who beheld heaven opened and the angels ascending and descending, Moses enveloped in the majesty of Mount Sinai,—knew the plan of redemption less perfectly than the poorest Christian, who, with the spirit of grace in his heart, has the whole Bible in his hand. Abraham rejoiced to see Christ's day, but he saw it through the dimness and the distance of two thousand years. Moses knew by the law, that the Lord was merciful, gracious, and long-suffering, but he knew not the plenitude of "grace and truth" revealed by Jesus Christ. Jacob recognized him as "the angel who delivered him from all evil," but not in his emphatic character—"a propitiation for the sins of the whole world." The prophets were doubtless filled with believing, and magnificent ideas concerning "the glory to be re-

vealed ;"—but they saw not as we see, every separate ray merged in one radiant centre ; every type, and every prophecy fulfilled in "the Lamb of God ;" every single and scattered lineament united in the person of Christ. The gospel they had, but not like ourselves, "without spot or wrinkle ;" a sun shining in its strength—a chain complete in every link—a whole perfect in every part ! It was not to them that steady light, which casting its rays backwards, illumines the vista from Revelation to Genesis, which enables man to read the mind of God throughout the past, and thereby to read it for the future. They had not Christ visibly crucified before them, that great mystery which explains all others.

And yet, incomplete as was *their* Bible, "behold how they loved it." And how should their steadfast faithfulness in the few things committed to them, confound us "upon whom the ends of the world are come ;" the younger born, yet possessors of the more glorious heritage. How had the heart of Adam throbbed with joy, if, when driven forth from Eden into the world his sin had

blighted, he could have turned to the fifty-third of Isaiah, and there read the clearer explanation of that cheering but mysterious promise, (his Bible of one verse,) "The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head." How had the more favored prophet rejoiced, could he, like us, have descended the mount of vision, gilded by the sun, but encompassed with clouds, and in the fifth of Romans have beheld prophetic rapture displaced by apostolic knowledge; hope losing itself in the light of confidence; a dim futurity superseded by an assured past, and that past destined to become a glowing and eternal present. How precious had the twelfth of Hebrews been to Job when sitting in the dust, abased in the sight of men, overwhelmed in his own spirit, and forgotten as it seemed by God. How had every pious mourner, under that first dispensation, hailed those "better promises," which afford us a clue through the labyrinth of dark providences.

But they labored, and we are entered into their labors; we have reaped the fruit, of which they, in patience and tribulation, sowed the seed; they were heralds, proclaim-

ing peace in a language they understood but in part, but which to us who possess the key, is not more glorious than simple. They received the first fruits, but for us was reserved the increase; their brightest blessings were only pledges of ours; their holiest ministrations but figures of ours yet holier; their tabernacle was but a similitude; their Canaan but an earnest; their substance but a shadow; their glory, their privileges, their dispensation from first to last, but one continued type of the "better covenant" established with us. Yet "not having received these promises," "having seen them only afar off," they "embraced them," and were "persuaded of them," and "obtained a good report through faith."

What inference should flash from this view of the Old Testament, its sainted heroes, and heroic saints? Surely, that diligently and devoutly, with all our hearts, with all our souls, and with all our understandings, *we* should study the Scriptures that are now a glorious whole:—as a revelation full; as an exhibition of Deity final; as a moral law complete; as explaining salvation perfect;

closed by the hand of God, sealed by the blood of Christ, attested by the Holy Ghost, destined only to be annulled in heaven, and then by the beatific vision of God himself! My beloved —, shall we dare to treat this Bible as a common book? as one to be read from fear, from compulsion, from a cold sense of duty? shall we loathe its manna as light food? God forbid! rather let us feed upon it with the eagerness of spiritual desire, gather it daily for our use, store it in our hearts as in an ark, an undying record, and everlasting remembrance, of human need and divine bounty. Let me now draw your attention to another point.

Under all the circumstantial varieties which attend the exhibition of God in the Bible, we should carefully bear in mind that he is one and the same being. The position is instantly admitted, but I want you to cherish a minute and comparing recollection of it, as opening more magnificent, more cheering, and more stimulating views, than can be conceived by the reader who contents himself with vague generalities. For instance; when you read of the divine descent

upon Mount Sinai, and when the trumpet waxing louder and louder, the mighty thunders, the thick darkness, the ten thousands of his saints, and above all, "the fiery law in his right hand," make you tremble to avouch this God as your God; how will it calm your trembling to realize that very God afterwards displayed on another Mount in the person of Christ, quenching, in his own blood, the fire which, proceeding from his own law, must otherwise have consumed the transgressors of it. When the mind is overpowered by the display of Jehovah's unveiled power, manifested in righteous, but tremendous judgments—in mercies that awe, in miracles that appal, in privileges rendered fearful by their grandeur—how sweet to turn aside to Nazareth, to Cana, to the grave of Lazarus, and the house of Zaccheus, and there behold the same Jehovah as Jesus! How wondrous the transition from Genesis and Exodus, to the gospels! To contrast God in the whirlwind of his might, the fierceness of his anger, the overwhelming fullness of his godhead, speaking a world into existence, and looking it again into destruc-

tion—with God “manifest in the flesh”—enshrined in dust, surrounded by, suffering from, submitting to, every human infirmity—boundless only in compassion, infinite only in patience, incomprehensible only in gentleness; lavish of his divine power, but only for the relief of others, omnipotent only for man.

I know not, however, whether the reverse of this view is not more astonishing; whether there be not even more to smite a hard heart, and warm a cold one, in the realization of Jesus as Jehovah. When you next peruse his journey to Samaria, how he sat on the well, and asked the woman (from a human need of the refreshment too) to “give him to drink,”—turn to the prayer of Habakkuk; the divine suppliant is the being therein represented as cleaving the earth with rivers,—at whose presence “the everlasting mountains were scattered, and the perpetual hills did bow.” He who approached the fig tree, hungry, and desiring of its fruit, was the same who said of old, “all the beasts of the forest are mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills.” The Lord who “turned and

looked upon Peter," with love that healed even whilst it wounded, was the same Lord who "looked upon Gideon," and in the "might" thereby imparted, bade him go and save Israel; the same Lord who "looked through the pillar of fire, and troubled the host of the Egyptians." He who suffered a disciple to lean upon his bosom in the holy confidence of affection, was one with him who said to Moses, "charge the people lest they break through unto the Lord to gaze, and many of them perish."

I will not carry my illustrations further; it is enough if you so retain the idea, that in reading the Scriptures, your impressions of the majesty and condescension of God, exert upon your mind a relative and tempering influence. In my next I will endeavor to furnish you with a few general directions as to what I think the best method of studying the Scriptures devotionally.

Ever believe me,

Fondly and faithfully yours.

LETTER IV.

MY DEAREST —,

My first hint for your guidance in the devotional study of the Scriptures, is comprised in a single phrase, at once simple and paradoxical :—**READ FOR YOURSELF.**

Whatever may be the portion that engages your attention, whether history, prophecy, parable, or precept, look through the original and primary application of the passages, for that individual instruction, that personal benefit, which they embody for every attentive reader. By doing otherwise, the Bible is degraded into the rank of common literature, and its wars, and kings, and wonders, have no more influence on our lives, than the wars, and kings, and wonders, of Plutarch, or Josephus. Do not suppose I want you to spir-

itualize or allegorize, when neither spiritual meaning nor allegory was intended ; I only desire that you should practically remember the inspired declaration, that all Scripture is, in some way or other, "profitable," either for "doctrine, reproof, correction, or instruction in righteousness." The New Testament is so directly preceptive, that there is less danger of reading it without a personal reference, than the Old Testament, which seems devoted less exclusively to spiritual directions and commands. We are apt to think of its prophets, patriarchs, and kings, more with regard to their offices and stations, than their individual characters and actions. We should think of them only as CHRISTIANS ; Christians, in truth, of larger growth and finer symmetry, but men, nevertheless, of like passions with ourselves ; partakers of that very grace which we may partake also ; and encompassed with the infirmities which encompass us : made indeed, by the providence of God, the precedents, the fathers ; and the worthies of the church, but not the less examples and instructors to it. They are lights set on a hill, not to claim our passive admira-

tion, and superstitious reverence, but as silent guides to quicken our approach to their abodes, and show the footsteps wherein our feet must tread. We do wrong when we invest the saints of old with a celestial radiance which makes us forget their brotherhood with the flesh ;—when the glowing visions of the prophet, the abundant revelations of the apostle, the ineffable scenes which rendered heaven to some a matter of sight, and not of faith—make us look away from their private and personal experience as Christians. In their public privileges, they must, indeed, be like the stars, and dwell in constellated grandeur, far above our reach and measurement, companions only to each other. Elijah, in his chariot of fire ; Moses, on the heaven-enveloped Sinai ; Job, hearkening to God in the whirlwind ; Jacob, met by the host of God ; and John, traversing the new Jerusalem, with its streets of gold and gates of pearl—are unapproachable ; they are not one with us, nor we one with them. But Elijah, and Moses, and Job, and Jacob, and John, as followers of God in the midst of crooked and perverse generations,—in their

tears and prayers, temptations, and infirmities,—yes, and in their spiritual consolations and enjoyments also, are our brethren, and our friends—bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh. The same may be said of that ONE, who, as man, united in his single person, and exemplified in his short sojourn upon earth, such grace and glory, that all possessed by the saints who had lived from the creation of the world to the period of his birth, was, in comparison, but a feeble spark. We know that error to be deadly which degrades this glorious ONE into a mere “teacher of righteousness :” but we may, nevertheless, regard his divinity so exclusively, or rather so abstractedly, that we shall not duly estimate the command laid upon us—to manifest his spirit, and walk in his steps.

READ FOR YOURSELF. Remember, the Old Testament was the gospel to the Jews, and either in similitude, example, inference, or type, you will find it contains all the doctrines, and most of the precepts of the New. You may not find the apostolic declaration, “Now, therefore, there is utterly a fault among you, because ye go to law with one

another ; why do ye not rather take wrong ? Why do ye not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded ? ” But you will find an illustration of this spirit of forbearance in Isaac, when he twice removed from the wells he had digged, because “ the herdmen of Gerar did strive with his herdmen, saying, the water is ours. ” We have not a verse like this : “ The servant of the Lord must not strive ; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient ; in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves : ”—but of whose example do we think ? What bright original of this apostolic portrait rises before our mind’s eye as we read ?—Surely that of Moses ; “ who was very meek, above all the men that were on the face of the earth. ” It is this striking interchange of precept and example ; this analogy between action and principle ; these strong parallels, these corroborating resemblances, which commend the Bible to the heart and conscience of the reader, who says, whensoever he takes up that holy book, “ I will hear what the Lord will say unto *me*. ”

The length of time you can appropriate to the devotional reading of the Scriptures,

must be a good deal regulated by circumstances. But if your heart is really interested, you will forego indifferent occupations, rather than abridge this. The length of the portion read, must also vary according to the view with which you read ; for the Bible is a new book every time we take it up with a new purpose. Sometimes it would be advantageous for you to read it in masses, many chapters at once, that you may see their connection, gather the general line of argument, trace the succession of incidents, the development of human character, the fulfilling of God's purposes. At another time, it would be well for you to take a small portion, and dissect it thoroughly ; marking every emphatic verse, even every striking phrase, and, until your memory will enable you to do it without, noting by the aid of a concordance, any similar incident, precept, doctrine, or expression, in the margin. If you read with interest and attention, you will soon discover the parallel passages for yourself. Both your eyes and ears will be quickened ; your memory, being ever in requisition, will ever be in readiness ; and many

sweet and instructive thoughts will arise in your mind, whilst comparing one page of inspiration with another. When I thus advise you to make, as much as possible, Scripture its own commentary,* I hope you will not suppose that I would set young people in the seat of their elders, or would express myself with other than the highest reverence of those divines whose annotations on the Scriptures are equally sound and scriptural. But the use of their valuable labors should encourage, not supersede our own. The mind that habitually submits itself to be a passive recipient of the thoughts of others, however correct and judicious those thoughts

* I will mention a few instances of what I mean to suggest. The Prodigal Son is a parabolic description of a sinner's restoration to the favor of God. In the second of Ephesians, we have a description of the same thing, only without the figurative medium. Joseph was an eminent type of Christ; but read Phil. ii. 5—12, in connection with Genesis xli. 38—45, and you will discover a typical minuteness, which, if you never observed it before, will both surprise and delight you. The prophetic allegory of the vineyard, Isaiah v. 1—8, and the parable, Matt. xxi. 33—42, are parallels: so are Psalm lxxx. and Isaiah lxiv.; so are Psalms xxxix.; xc.; cii. 1—13, and Job vii.

may be, is certainly an indolent mind, without being of necessity a humble one. "Search the Scriptures," is an unlimited and universal command; as applicable to the peasant and the child, as to any student of prophecy, or professor of sacred literature, if the object of that search be to find "Him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets did write." Perhaps our Saviour's expression, "the one ought ye to do, and not to leave the other undone," applies with a happy discrimination to the relative duty of studying the Scriptures without any reference to human aids; and again, of thankfully employing such aids, when offered by those who are competent to offer them.

But, oh! dearest —, how vain will be your reading, how vain your interest in what you read, how vain your search after truth, if you do not "seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness"—if you do not pray for his enlightening Spirit! Without this, your imagination may be charmed, your sensibility excited, and your mind enriched, but your heart will continue at

“enmity towards God :” your life remain uninfluenced by his precepts. The waters of the sanctuary may flow over your soul, yet fail to fertilize and refresh ; the manna which should serve for food, will become corrupt, and afford no nourishment ; your spiritual knowledge, like the carved cherubim and palm trees of the temple, will breathe no life, and yield no fruit. So then, you must pray, and pray first for a praying spirit, or even the word of God will profit you nothing. But ask God to be his own interpreter, and he will make that word plain, and not only plain, but precious. Its treasures may at first be hidden, but none ever rightly sought without finding, as none ever found without being satisfied.

These letters have grown far beyond their intended limits : I will now sum up my advice, and bid you farewell. Read with expectation. Read with reverence. Read for yourself. Read with prayer. Then will you seldom lay down that holy book without some apprehension of Simeon’s joyful feeling, when he took his infant Saviour in his arms,

and said, "mine eyes have seen thy salvation!"

Believe me ever,

Fondly and faithfully yours.

LETTER V.

MY DEAR —,

RELIGION is not in reality a gloomy, unintelligible thing ; a principle which, when admitted into the human mind, is destructive of intellect and happiness. It is the direction of natural energy into a worthy channel ; the devotion of the mind to subjects immortal as itself. Religion is not a thing of Sundays and sermons, creeds and commentaries ; of separate acts, and distinct observances ; it is a life-giving, life-pervading spirit, intended to exercise over our motives just that guiding, quickening, controlling influence, which the mind exercises over the body. True religion is cheerful. Whilst its highest joy is derived from the contemplation of God, in his word, works, and ways, in

his threefold character of Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier—whilst it feels that he, and he only, has a right, because he, and he only is worthy, to be loved supremely—it infringes upon no duty which we owe to our fellow-creatures ; upon no pleasure which accords with right reason. If you should bring me a catalogue of tastes, habits, pursuits, and enjoyments, which religion really did require to be modified, or surrendered, I would undertake to prove that reason commanded the same. True piety is active. Man was made for occupation : a life wholly contemplative, is not a Christian life : it is necessary to follow a thousand pursuits, it is lawful to indulge in a thousand tastes, which in themselves have entire and simple reference to this world ;—but however unconnected with religion in the act, there is nothing which may not, which ought not, to be connected with it by the motive. Herein consists one chief comfort of this principle,—it affords a new stimulus to exertion—it supplies a sufficient motive. Others may actuate us, but eventually they fail both to satisfy the judgment, and animate the heart. Self-aggrandizement, abstract ideas of duty,

desire of self-complacency, and even desire to please, are not only wrong in their principle, but in their retrospect and reaction really induce sorrow. Self is the grand centre in every unrenewed mind; the sun, round which, at a greater or a lesser distance, every feeling revolves; self, in some shape or other, is the root from which every action grows. A person may, even after religion is received into the heart as a regenerating principle, do precisely similar things, in a manner precisely similar to what he would have done before; the difference will consist in his new motive; and that motive will be a hearty, honest, constant desire to glorify and serve God, and to benefit his fellow-creatures for the sake of God; a perpetual reference to the declared will of God, as a standard of duty; a constant eye to the approbation of God, in the place of his former desire of the approbation of his fellow-men. This may, and generally will have some influence even in the present case, but it is no longer the grand object of his regard; it is a secondary consideration: if it ensues, well and good; if not, as "thou God seest me," was his motive, so will it be his

consolation. General as this statement may be, the argument might be drawn out and applied to points of conduct apparently the most remote from its influence. It by no means follows, that a person thus influenced will be continually engaged in religious duties. If you will turn to "The Elixir," in Herbert's poems, you will find what I mean, quaintly but forcibly expressed. It is however in the character and life of the Redeemer, that we shall find the full illustration of the sanctifying of common actions by divine principles; of things, in themselves indifferent, being ennobled by the purpose to which they were directed. He came "eating and drinking;" distinguished by no outward austerity, or repulsive peculiarity; conforming to established laws, and sanctioning the innocent usages of society. But if we look through the outer texture of his history, we behold him intent every moment upon his Father's work; we behold him making every movement, however trivial, however human, tend to that one great purpose for which he was manifested; having his eye equally fixed on the salvation of sinners, whether spending the whole night in

prayer, or tempted in the wilderness, or sitting at meat with a rich Pharisee, or feeding a hungry wayworn multitude. If ever we are inclined to say, "Why did Jesus do this? why did Deity come in such close contact with the every-day meannesses of life?"—let us look again, and find the answer in his oneness of purpose; and in that oneness of purpose, find also a guide and pattern for ourselves.

"For God before, man like himself did frame,
But God himself now, like mortal man became."

Yours, my dear ——,

Truly and faithfully.

LETTER VI.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I ADMIT that the work you mention, contains many papers that are unexceptionable ; but what merits censure, is the *spirit* evident throughout—the spirit of one, looking for and valuing, nothing beyond the things of this world. But setting aside this individual case, let us examine these matters more closely. If God, my dear friend, has endowed us with faculties for serving him, and if it is solely by his merciful care that these faculties are preserved to us, is it not just that to his service they should be devoted? And if, in order to make his yoke easy, God has so constituted our minds, that our happiness is bound up with this first great duty, —if, future considerations apart, peace even

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in this life, is only to be found in the way he has appointed—is it not expedient, as well as just, that we should devote ourselves to his service? But there is one error, of so harassing and deterring a nature, that I think it must be a common hindrance suggested to young and inquiring minds—it is the looking upon religion as a dry, abstract code of laws; a series of observances, of requirements, of penances, and self-denials; a system of negations; a something that is to induce gloom and imbecility of mind; to blight our prospects, wither our joys, and transform the garden of life into “a howling wilderness.” I wish I could convey to you an adequate perception of this delusion. When once a sincere and influential desire to love and serve God has entered into the heart, new tastes, new affections, new views of every kind, spring up spontaneously:—duty becomes choice; obedience, a service of the will rather than of the conscience:—and the natural language of that heart is, “Oh, how I love thy law!” Then religion is seen in its true light, its native lustre; as a renewing principle, introducing order into

chaos, light into darkness ; imparting strength to those points of character which before were weak ; softening what was harsh ; taking away the false glory which invested some old pleasures, but presenting in their stead, new and better ones, and bestowing fresh grace and beauty on those which were innocent and allowable. I do not think that any person, however high his natural genius and sensibility, can *fully* feel the glories of nature, unless he be the subject of devotional feeling. He may be a poet, he may be a painter, but the unlettered Christian who can

“ Lift to heaven an unpretentious eye,
And smiling say—‘ My Father made them all,’ ”

enjoys them with purer zest.*

God, my dear friend, is as sufficient to satisfy the heart, as he is worthy to occupy the mind. It is good to be laid upon a sick

* “ Since I have known God in a saving manner, painting, poetry, and music, have had charms unknown to me before. I have received what I suppose is a taste for them ; for religion has refined my mind, and made it susceptible of impressions from the sublime and beautiful. O how religion secures the heightened enjoyment of those pleasures which keep so many from God, by their becoming a source of pride ! ” —HENRY MARTYN.

bed (if he bless it)—to see the vanity of even the world's best and fairest ! What is poetry to the languid ear ? What are pictures to the aching eye ? or praise, or music, or gaiety, to the sick and sinking heart ? Where is the mind itself, with all its boasted resources ?—Yet when the thoughts are confused, and the fancy fevered—the judgment weakened, and the memory faithless,—even then, the words which God speaks in his gospel, are spirit and life. Just where the world leaves us, He takes us up. Look at the images under which he is figured, and think whether they will apply to any other object in the universe ?—A “strong hold in the day of trouble”—a “light to them that sit in darkness”—a “refuge from the storm”—a “shadow from the heat”—“strength” in weakness—“wisdom” in perplexity—a “comforter” in affliction :—a sun, a shield, a fortress, a deliverer, a portion, a father, a friend, a saviour—in all a God ! Is it not base ingratitude to forget this being, “who daily loadeth us with benefits,” until he remove some of those benefits ?—to put off thinking of Him who is worthy of the highest

powers of the highest mind, till we can think of nothing to any purpose? It is not enough that to the world's blinded vision, our temper, conduct, and character, seem fair and free from blemish; God regards the heart far more than the action; his eye pierces through motives, thoughts, and desires; and estimates them solely as they have regard to himself, his glory, and his will. It is sufficient condemnation if we *forget* God. I give you the fourth and fifth verses of the hundred and sixth Psalm, as a daily prayer.

May the blessing of God be upon you, and may he teach you as none other can.

I leave much unsaid, but I know you read his word; and I know that if you ask him, he will give you the hearing ear, the seeing eye, and the understanding heart.

My dear friend, farewell.

LETTER VII.

MY DEAR —,

WE will not lose any time in preface and preliminaries, but come at once to the consideration of those points which have struck me as most important.

You will not, I hope, be disappointed, if I write to you in a less amusing, and more serious strain, than I might have done in time past; for I will not conceal from you, that my own views and feelings are, on one all-important subject, greatly changed. A bed of sickness has, I hope, been a bed of blessing; and by revealing to me the awfulness of death, has shown to me the true value of life. Allow me then, my dear —, with an earnestness prompted by real regard, to explain wherein I conceive its true value con-

sists;—and when, to the best of my ability, I have done so, you will readily draw the proper inferences for yourself.

Life, even at the longest, is short; at the happiest, is full of vexation; in its prosperity, it is transitory; at its best estate, vanity:—"One generation cometh, and another goeth:"—the things we enjoy are passing, and we are passing who enjoy them. The Scriptures seem at a loss how to express its frailty with sufficient force—"a vapor" that vanisheth away—a flower flourishing and fading in a day—"a handbreath"—"a watch in the night"—"a sleep when one awaketh"—"a dream"—"a sound." Yet upon this fleeting, changing life; upon that portion of its threescore years and ten allotted to us, depends eternity!—endless duration!—everlasting existence! it is the sword hanging by a single quivering hair. The heathen king was wisely reminded that he was mortal; let us, more wisely still, remember that we are immortal: not only that we are born to die, but that we die to live for ever. And how?—Exactly in that state for which our present life has prepared us;

either in union with, or alienation from, the exhaustless source of grace, glory, and happiness—God. Were you to ask a number of persons what was the true end of life, each would give you a different reply : and unless there was a Christian present, each reply would be wrong. Riches make themselves wings ; the breath that gives fame, can destroy it ; pleasure is the spark that mounts upwards and expires :—in these is nothing enduring ; nothing that prepares an immortal being for future immortality ; nothing that arms the soul against the changes of time, and the inroads of affliction ; nothing that in the end satisfies the soul. God gave this world, with all its possessions, to minister to the comfort of his creature man, but he knew that not one of them could fill the void within ; and therefore, as a wise and tender friend, he says to each of us, “ Give *me* thy heart.” And it is for this heart also, that the enemy of man contends. The knee may be bent in prayer, the ear listen to religious instruction, the lips repeat scripture truth, the whole person seem occupied in religious duties—but for these he cares not ; he knows that the

heart can alone give value to the offering; and it is the heart he allures away. Our Saviour implied this when he gave us that infallible rule for self-examination, "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." At the great day of account, when the books shall be opened and the Judge set, the question will not be—did you say your prayers? did you follow gaiety? did you spend your time in frivolous employments? A single reference to a single test, will suffice to cover with confusion, or fill with humble confidence; to open or shut the gates of heaven—"Lovest thou me?"

You may wonder why I pause so long on the religious value of life, but, in fact, it involves every other consideration. Once fully recognize this axiom—time the school for eternity—and our tastes, our pursuits, our employments, and our recreations, will follow in well regulated order. So long as we fancy ourselves the mere creatures of a day, at liberty to please ourselves, and do what we will with our own, we must necessarily be triflers. We may mix up much that is graceful and attractive, nay, much even that is valuable, with

our trifling, but if we leave eternity out of our calculation, and provide only for time, we may have our reward in present pleasure, and present success ; but when death comes, where will that reward be ? If the things that are seen are our chief good, what is to be done when we can neither take them away with us, nor remain on earth to enjoy them ? But I should deceive you, my dear ——, were I to represent this necessary surrender of the heart to God as easy, or in our own unassisted power ; no, it is from God that we must seek and desire willingness to honor and obey him. It is he who must teach us to know, in order that we may love ; to love, in order that we may serve him. When such willingness is induced in the soul, then, and then only, begins true, solid, lasting happiness. This is the “inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away :” the hidden treasure which “neither moth nor rust can corrupt, nor thieves break through and steal,” which time cannot impair, nor death itself destroy. It is offered freely to all ; “Whosoever will, let him come and take of the water of life freely”—“If ye,

being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him." These are the words of Him "who spake as never man spake;" and through the Scripture, he speaks them to each of us. My dear —, let them not be spoken in vain. "Ask, and it shall be given *you*; seek, and *you* shall find." I know well that the disinclined heart will suggest a thousand objections to these things, but I know also that they are false and frivolous. Perhaps you will tell me that you are happy already, and ask, why you may not remain as you are. You may, if your happiness is established on a rock; but if it be built upon the shifting sands, pause before you determine. Youth, gaiety, and good temper, may give a charm to your present existence; but then the future—sickness, affliction, age, death—will they, of themselves, avail for those dark hours? Give this a serious thought; and may you be enabled to "remember your Creator in the days of your youth, while the evil days come not, and the years draw nigh when you shall


say, I have no pleasure in them." May you be enabled from this time to say unto Him, "My Father, thou art the guide of my youth."

Believe me, my dear —,

Affectionately yours.

LETTER VIII.

MY DEAR —,



IT is so:—when we come to the work of watching over our hearts, and amending our lives, in earnest, as to a great and all-important work, which requires, not merely the whole concentrated energies of the human mind, but the powerful assistance of the Holy Spirit added thereto, and working therewith, we feel for the first time the weakness, the vacillation, the worldliness, the propensity to error, the indisposition to duty, the sin in our nature ! Herein consists the benefit of sickness, and next to sickness of retirement. We there learn ourselves, that book of many pages, that text of many meanings ! An individual thrown, and thrown under disadvantageous circumstances, into close and

constant intercourse with the world, has this book closed against him ; at least, it requires a courageous, almost a mighty effort to break open its seals, and get at its secrets. In the noise and glare of a worldly life, how many false motives, how many erroneous opinions, may steal in and out of the heart unnoticed ; and shape themselves into action, and express themselves in words, contrary to the spirit of upright self-denying religion, with an influence so silent and unobtrusive, that the individual is not aware of the deadening process going on within him. Business, just, lawful, necessary business, comes first, with its imperative claims upon the mass of his time, and the main strength of his mind : recreation follows, and with the same plea of necessity, tithes the remaining portion : physical nature, wearied, wanting, over-tasked nature, brings up the rear, and demands all that remains, with an urgency not to be parried or set aside. Such is the tread-mill round ; such the incessant surrender of time, thought, and strength, to business, pleasure, and physical requirements !—and there remains nothing for God ; nothing even for self in the

best sense, till sickness comes, or till death suddenly stalks in, breaks like a giant the bands that have fettered the soul to earth, brings the struggling captive into the presence of its Maker, teaches in a moment, and with an energy not to be gainsaid, that one forgotten necessary was—to learn to die ;—that if many things were expedient, one was emphatically “ needful ;” if many good, one was the chief good, without which, all else exerted an ensnaring and destroying influence—with which, every pursuit would have been ennobled, every pure pleasure enhanced, every affection purified, every power strengthened, every dispensation rendered a blessing, every affliction salutary. Alas, for the trials and temptations of this busy, changing, proud, perishing world ! and alas for those, obliged to pass through its furnace !—called to use, yet commanded not to abuse it ; to be “ not slothful in business,” yet “ fervent in spirit ;” to be a citizen in its high places, yet maintain the feelings of a pilgrim and a stranger ; to mingle in the pageant, without being conformed to its fashions, or governed by its motives, or anxious for its honors.

Alas ! for such a one, were there no Divine Spirit to strengthen him with might in his inner man ; no compassionate Father to relieve his doubts, and fears, and sinkings of heart ; to hear his confessions of weakness, his supplications for wisdom, support, and consolation ; were there no all-atoning Redeemer to blot out the records of sin, condemnation, deficiency, and error ; to present his prayers, plead his cause on high, and throw over the suppliant the garment of salvation ! If I knew a friend so circumstanced, so peculiarly exposed to the snares and strifes of this world's influence ; and if I felt for that friend the truest regard, joined to the most anxious interest ; and if I knew, too, that circumstances shielded me from much to which he was exposed—how sacred a duty would it seem, to bring before him glimpses of those truths which counteracting causes so tended to shut out ; to venture to press home the absolute duty, the paramount importance of seeking first the kingdom of God, *his* righteousness, *his* rewards, *his* pleasures, and *his* service. Oh ! how sacred a duty would it appear to think of that individual in the

retired hours of meditation ; to garrison him with desires for his heavenly interests, prayers for his spiritual welfare. Forgive the freedom of this address :—*I* have such a friend—and weak as she may be, *you* have such a well-wisher.

LETTER IX.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Do not be discouraged. God, when educating a soul for himself, suffers it to be tried, tempted, cast down, and sometimes almost destroyed, because man is ever prone to ascribe that praise to himself, which belongs only to his Creator ; prone continually to mistake imparted grace for inherent goodness. We see the alternations of assistance given, and assistance withdrawn or withheld, of affliction and prosperity, a prominent feature in God's dealings with his chosen people, the Jews, whose history shadows forth his dealings with Christians generally. He fed them with manna, and he suffered them to hunger ; he brought forth water out of the rock at one time, and at

another obliged them to drink of an embittered fountain ; now he gave them rest beneath the green palm-trees of Elim, and again, made them traverse the great and terrible wilderness. Why these variations ? Why this discipline ? Why expose them to a painful pilgrimage of forty years, when as many days would have sufficed for their journey into the promised land ? Why were they not placed at once in rest, wealth, and happiness ? God has told us : It was, said he, addressing the Jews at the close of their wanderings, "to humble thee, and prove thee, to know what was in thine heart." "Without me," says the Saviour, "ye can do nothing." "I can do all things," says St. Paul, "through Christ, which strengtheneth me :"—here we have the same system of discipline applied to us spiritually, which to the Jews had been applied temporally. And why ? That no flesh may glory in the presence of the Lord ; that vain, proud, erring man, by constantly feeling the weakness of his own strength, may constantly rely upon his Saviour's ; that he may be weaned from self-righteous dependence, from ambitious

- hopes, and froward reasonings, and be thankful to embrace salvation as offered in the gospel, by God in the office of Saviour, to man in his character of sinner. The complaints you make of your own heart, give me the greatest pleasure, and encourage sanguine hopes concerning you. If a blind man were in a dark room, what would you pronounce the first symptom of restored vision? Surely a consciousness of the surrounding darkness. So is it with the mind of man. He is by nature blind to his benighted state: but when the Spirit of truth dawns into his soul, he becomes conscious of evils, disorders, and miseries, of which he was before ignorant; and as the light increases, he becomes increasingly conscious of his remaining darkness, and strives more anxiously, and more humbly, for yet clearer illumination. Then, he takes up the Bible and feelingly understands why it is called "a lamp to our paths;" then, he rejoices to see Christ styled the "light of the world;" then, he seeks earnestly the spiritual wisdom "which cometh down from the Father of lights;" and then, though conscious that in himself he is but dust, he would beam
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like the planets, by reflection, and "let his light so shine before men, that they, seeing his good deeds, may glorify"—himself? No, but the source whence he derived that light, his "Father which is in heaven." Grieve not then as though some strange thing had happened to you, as though none besides yourself were ever subject to wandering affections, unstable purposes, inadequate exertions, and vain thoughts—but I beseech you GO ON. Do not let the great enemy persuade you that your small progress in the divine life is a proof that you ought to discontinue your efforts and make none. Take the example of Gideon's followers: "faint, yet pursuing." Take the glorified Saviour's charge: "Thou hast a little strength, hold that fast which thou hast." Take all the exceeding great and precious promises, which the time would fail me to enumerate. God does not so much regard our degree of attainment, as our sincerity of desire, our reality of intention. None but "he that overcometh shall inherit all things;" but he who is struggling is in the way to overcome; let this encourage you to struggle on. If you are not satisfied that you

have yet entered into the strait gate, thank him who has given you grace to "strive to enter in," and seek more grace that you may strive on. Do not set God before you as the hard master, the relentless judge, the consuming fire : but as he is in Christ, the reconciled Father, the compassionate High Priest, the God of love, ever willing to hear, ever ready to help ;—the teacher of the ignorant, if the condemner of the proud and self-willed. Many a Christian who is now a pillar of the temple of God in heaven, was on earth a bruised reed. Do not be discouraged.

Even if we feel that the kingdom of God is in our hearts but as the single grain of the smallest seed—even if we feel that our eyes are only sufficiently open to discern "men as trees, walking—" we are still called to be thankful and to hope ; because that little seed may grow into a vigorous tree, that clouded vision brighten into perfect sight. But in such a case, we are also called to perseverance, to prayer, to pains-taking, lest any tare obstruct, any wilfully cherished hindrance delay, and so the work be left unfinished and insecure. We have no power to give ourselves

grace ; to plant righteousness in our own hearts ; to open our own eyes ; but we have power to avoid whatever might have a counteracting influence ; that might provoke God to withhold from us increase of strength, the joy of his presence, the comforts of his Spirit. He will not "sow among thorns." If we are unfaithful in little, we shall be unfaithful in much. We must ask for grace in order that we may improve grace. An eminent Christian once gave a young friend as a motto, these words of Christ, "Occupy till I come." She meant thus : "You discern somewhat of the more excellent way ; you have some knowledge, some desire of Christian duty ; but he has not yet so decidedly and influentially revealed himself by his Spirit, that you are quite able, or quite willing to call him Master, and follow him fully. Christ says to you, 'Occupy till I come ;' wait upon me ; seek me ; use the light you have, fully and faithfully ; quench not the Spirit ; avoid every thing questionable or inexpedient." "Blessed is that servant whom his Lord when he cometh shall find so watching." "Behold I stand at the door, and knock : if any man

hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him." It is said, "blessed are they that do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled." But filled in what measure? Precisely according to that in which they have hungered and thirsted. In the spiritual, no less than in the worldly life, it is the hand of the "diligent that maketh rich;" it is the sluggard that "desireth and hath nothing." The path to Zion is an ascent; the Christian course, a going "from strength to strength;" the light of grace, a "light that shineth more and more." My dear friend, when exposed to the snares of the world, and our own evil hearts, let us be aroused by the remembrance that "the time is short." Life is but a day's journey; shall we spend its best hours in gathering flowers, or chasing butterflies? Again, when tried by cares, sorrows and temptations, let us draw comfort from the same consideration—"The time is short." But there is only one hand which can support us that our footsteps slip not, and that is the right hand of the Most High. It is promised, and we must continually ask its guidance.

LETTER X.

MY DEAR —,

Do not start, if I say, that there is a depression of spirits which calls for congratulation rather than sympathy, because it is the earnest and assurance of future joy, and joy of the purest and most refined nature. "The sorrow of the world worketh death;" but sorrow excited by the spiritual discernment of sin, is, though grievous at the time, a sorrow by which the heart is made better; a sorrow which is not without hope; a sorrow which has a higher origin than any produced by earthly agency. But it is a decided error in any individual to suppose that he or she alone possesses an evil nature; it is the nature of all mankind—a fallen nature as regards its original purity—a pol-

luted nature in the eye of him who is "glorious in holiness"—a nature which, notwithstanding the attractions and accomplishments that may avail its obliquity in the sight of man, is declared by the Scriptures to be "enmity towards God." This is a mournful picture, but it has a reverse! for even this nature is capable of being renewed, purified, exalted, and quickened; restored to the friendship of God, and, in that, restored to happiness. But this great work cannot be effected by any thing short of a divine influence. The Spirit of God is the almighty agent, and the work is scripturally set forth under a variety of significant emblems; as of the wind blowing "where it listeth," as of water, fire, dew, rain, the natural offices of which are to refresh, purify, soften, and fertilize. But before the Holy Spirit can act as a comforter, he must first act as a convincer. He must convince of sin; of sin in thought, motive, and affection; of sin, not so much as exhibited in the life, as existing in the secret folds of the heart. A person, thus circumstanced, is in the condition of one who finds he has been sleeping on the brink of a preci-

pice ; all his former confidence of safety, which resulted merely from his ignorance of danger, has given place to dread, and he has no thought but, "What must I do to be saved !"

In our unconvinced state, we are satisfied with a vague notion of doing our duty, and make that our plea for reward, as we make an equally vague notion of the goodness of God, our plea for pardon, should we egregiously fail in our undertaking. This "doing our duty" has seldom, however, any reference beyond the requirements of society, any actuating motive beyond opinion, and consequently is entitled to no reward of a higher species than applause. Now, when the mind first becomes convinced of a deficiency in duty, its primary impulse is to raise the standard of excellence, and redouble its efforts to reach that standard. With the young man in the Gospel it says, "What good thing shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?" Alas! all efforts to attain peace in this way are vain—"It is as when a hungry man dreameth that he eateth, and he awaketh, and his soul hath appetite." Day after day

the little Babel of duties is destroyed, and the disquieted heart repeats the same mournful history ; “ the good that I would, I do not, but the evil that I would not, that I do.” This too is a mournful case, but this too has a reverse. If the Holy Spirit’s first office is to convince of sin, his next, is to supply a remedy ; to discover the way of peace ; to convince of righteousness : of righteousness so complete, that it can satisfy the law of God ; so pure, that it can abide the sight of God ; so precious, that it can purchase the favor of God ; so boundless, that it is sufficient for the whole human race ; so free, that it is offered without money and without price ; so unconditional, that its only invitations are, “ Ask, and ye shall have,” and “ Whosoever will, let him come.” But to whose righteousness can this description apply ? Not to our own, which fades as a leaf, and withers as the green herb ; not to that of saint, or prophet, or martyr, though the most illustrious of his brethren ; not to that of angel or archangel, principality, or power, or of any created intelligence in earth or heaven : it applies solely to the “ Lord our

righteousness,"—to him who "did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth,"—who was offered once, the just for the unjust ; "a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction, for the sins of the whole world !" Here is the grand and only remedy for spiritual distress ; the true balm for a wounded spirit. To believe in Christ, not as before, with a cold assent, as to a fact in history, but with a deep sense of our own unworthiness, and of his ability and willingness to save to the uttermost ; to renounce all hope, and all desire of pardon, unconnected with his atonement ; to be, and to be willing to be, a mere recipient of undeserved favor—this is the way of salvation. To attempt to overcome either temptation without, or wrong tempers within, is vain, until we are possessed of that faith which is the only overcoming principle—which is the gift of God ; but which, like every other spiritual gift, is promised to the suppliant. An individual desirous of maintaining "a conscience void of offence, both toward God and toward man," is as likely to accomplish this by his own unassisted efforts, as a bird to fly

without wings, or a ship to be impelled without sails. Let me beg your earnest attention to the following Scriptures,* though without the enlightening influence of the Spirit that inspired them, even they will fail to afford instruction and consolation. Say not, "It is high, I cannot attain to it;" it is simple also, and the contrite heart and childlike spirit, are those to which it is especially promised. I have not yet touched upon the point which generally occasions preponderating anxiety, namely, how a person can be placed in a state of moral safety, or be assured, beyond the possibility of doubt, that he shall not fall into gross dere-

* Psalms xxv. xxvii. xxxviii. xxxix. li. lxxxv. lxxxvi. cii. cxix. cxxx. as manuals of devotion. The whole of St. John's Gospel, but more especially the 3d and 15th chapters, as specifying the need there is that our nature should be renewed, and the means whereby it must be accomplished. Ezekiel xxxvi. 25—33. Isaiah lv. St. Luke iv. 14—22. xv. Psalm ciii. exemplify the willingness of God to accept all without exception who desire to return to his favor, and also describe his boundless love and compassion. Isaiah liii. Romans v. Ephes. ii. point out the method in which a fallen creature is to be accounted righteous in the sight of God, and consequently regarded with complacency.

fiction of duty. Believe me, to be immured in a nunnery, or even a dungeon, will not afford this security: outward circumstances may preserve from outward crime; but "God regardeth the heart," and this may oppose his will, and neglect his love, as well in the deepest retirement as in the bustle and business of society. Human nature possesses not this security in itself; but I think the following passages will prove to you that such security nevertheless exists. "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God." (2 Cor. iii. 5.) "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." (Phil. iv. 13.) "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him." (James i. 5.) "I will instruct thee, and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go." (Psalm xxxii. 8.) "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord." (Rom. vii. 24, 25.) "Sin shall not have dominion over you, for ye are not under the law, but under

grace." (Rom. vi. 6.) "He will subdue our iniquities." (Micah vii. 9.) "The God of Israel is he that giveth strength to his people." (Psalm lxviii. 35.) "He giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no might he increaseth strength." (Isa. xxxix. 29.) "A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench." (Isa. xliii. 3.) "Say to them that are of a fearful heart, be strong, fear not." (Isa. xxxv. 4.) "I will strengthen them, and they shall walk up and down in his name, saith the Lord." (Zech. x. 12.) "That is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy." (Jude 24.) "My grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness." (2 Cor. xii. 9.) "The Lord, he it is that doth go before thee, he will be with thee; he will not fail thee, neither forsake thee." (Deut. xxxi. 8.) "God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able, but will, with the temptation, make a way to escape that ye may be able to bear it." (1 Cor. x. 13.) "Seeing, then, that we have a great

High Priest that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not a High Priest which cannot be touched with a feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore go boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace, to help in time of need." (Heb. iv. 14—17.) "Be careful for nothing, but in every thing by prayer and supplication let your requests be made known unto God." (Phil. iv. 6.) "The Lord is faithful who shall establish you and keep you from evil." (2 Thess. iii. 3.) And now, my dear —, surely, after perusing these passages, which are but a few of the very many I might select, none can say, "There is no hope;" such a declaration would imply, that in the Scriptures there is no truth. There is no hope for the dead, who hear no more the voice of inviting mercy, and whose state, if they heard it not when living, is for ever determined. There is no hope for the gay scoffer, for the self-complacent, the indifferent, and the forgetful—no hope; at least, so long as they remain such;

but for the bowed and broken spirit, that trembles under a combined sense of the evil of sin, the need of holiness, and the impossibility of attaining it by merely human means, there is nothing but hope. The Gospel says to such an one, "Be not fearful, but believing; weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning; for who hath made you sorry, but the same who will make you glad?" He has wounded you with the wound, as it *seems*, of an enemy—dried up the sources of earthly delight, and made you feed upon wormwood, but only that he may restore your soul to more perfect health, to purer and more lasting peace. It is because God loves you that he thus chastens you. Resign yourself into his hands; suffer him to discipline you as he sees fit; let him guide you, though it be through a desolate wilderness; for the day shall come, wherein you shall say, "O Lord, I will praise thee, though thou wast angry with me; for thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortedst me." Peace is the gift of God, and whilst we seek the possession of it, we must beware how we seek it. No round of observances,

no self-inflicted penance, no devotional duties, will suffice for the purchase ; we must solicit it in the name, and for the sake of him who is "exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour." Upon that great and gracious friend none need fear to rest his hopes, and cast his burdens. He can bind up the broken in heart, for he is love. He can enlighten the bewildered mind, for he is wisdom. He can rescue the oppressed from oppression, for he is power.

"He is a path, if any be misled ;
 He is a robe, if any naked be ;
 If any chance to hunger, he is bread ;
 If any be a bondman, he is free ;
 If any be but weak, how strong is he !
 To dead men life he is, to sick men health ;
 To blind men sight, and to the needy wealth,
 A pleasure without loss, a treasure without stealth."*

Long as my letter is, I have not said half that the subject demands. Accept it, however, as a proof of sincere regard on the part of

Yours faithfully.

* Giles Fletcher's "Christ's Triumph over Death."

LETTER XI.

YOUNG, gifted, and beloved—yet unhappy ! Blessed with health, leisure, and competence —yet habitually sad ! Wholly your own mistress, and a Christian by more than profession—yet subject to ennui ! Indeed, my dearest —, this is a sad state of things, though, independent of your own confession, I know it to be one fully possible, and, with characters like your own, very common. Minds of a reflective, and somewhat timid cast, are most liable to the influence of morbid sensibility ; they soon begin to look through, rather than upon society, and consequently become disgusted with the construction of it. They serve their pleasures as children do their toys—pull them to pieces in order to ascertain their internal me-

chanism ; and their emotions, as the same children serve rose-buds—open them to accelerate their time of bloom. Without intentional want of benevolence, they feel little towards their fellow-creatures beyond general good-will, or perfect indifference, whilst their affections are few, ardent, arbitrary, and exclusive.

To bring the subject back to a personal point, by quoting an expression of your own, "they live in a little world of their own creation ;" which little world, by the way, seldom contains many inhabitants. There is generally much that is interesting in a mind thus constituted, and when religious principle gets firm and influential hold of its energies, the excellence which results is perhaps of a higher kind, than can be engrafted on a weaker, gayer character. This admission is not meant, however, to reconcile you to a state of feeling at once unnatural and indefensible : the world might as well be one universal churchyard, as a world of fastidious, exclusive, sensitive beings, who hold their spirits as the streamer does its direction, at the will of every fluttering breeze.

But as you have applied to me for counsel, I wish, like a prudent physician, to gain your confidence in the outset ; to prove that I understand your case, before I bid you follow my prescriptions. From me too you are assured of affectionate sympathy, not merely because I love you, but because I myself lived many years under the star of melancholy, and therefore know, from personal experience, its pains, its pleasure, and its penalties. I know, too, something of a happier state, and with care and attention, (you must allow me to keep up the physician's phrase,) so, I doubt not, will you. In one sense you are sensible of the numberless and solid comforts you enjoy ; in another, you are blind to them : never having known their loss, you esteem them matters of course, and they do not produce excitement. You have, on the other hand, some drawbacks, a few annoyances ; and to these you are not so torpid as you are to the blessings ; these excite positive irritation and weariness, and by proving to you that life does not lie in fairy land, make you sometimes wish there were no life at all. Day after day creeps on, divided between irksome submission to ordinary, and there-

fore disagreeable duties, vain dreams of a fancied existence fraught with interest and free from alloy, whilst the pleasures really in accordance with your own tastes fail to satisfy, because you expect too much from them. In the Edens of your own making you cease to be "emparadised." Ah! my love, whence is all this? One short and simple answer will suffice, even that which accounts for all human error, and human unhappiness—you have forgotten the true end of life; silently, and unconsciously, you have disconnected it from eternity, and therefore its beauty has no bloom, and there is no balm for its disquietudes.

Much has been said, and strikingly said, of the painful contrast between romance and reality; but simile, instance and allegory, are all in vain, unless the Spirit of Truth accompany both writer and reader. May that Spirit, dearest —, though now it seems an eclipsed sun, again shine "into your heart, and make its wilderness rejoice and blossom as the rose." When I think of your real circumstances, I wish it were the extravagant hyperbole it appears, to apply such a

phrase to one so young, and, as regards real trials, so sheltered. Yet do not suppose I wish to deceive you into gay and thoughtless views ; I could paint you a much more melancholy picture of life than you could possibly do for yourself. The only Being who ever promised peace, prefaced that promise with a decided intimation of the world's unutterable vanity.

To speak honestly, I do not think you will ever find a smoother path than the one which you are now treading. You may certainly have some enjoyments added, but others will as certainly be subtracted. With an increase of society consonant to your feelings, your keen zest for it may proportionately diminish : or you may have less health, and additional cares. Should you gain more friends, your affection for them may be less ardent, and less confiding. "There is a limit to all our enjoyments, and every desire bears its death in its very gratification. Curiosity languishes under repeated stimulants : novelties cease to excite surprise. He who has sallied into the world, full of sunny anticipations, finds too

soon how different the distant scene becomes when visited. The smooth place roughens as he approaches ; the wild place becomes tame and barren ; the fairy tints that beguiled him on, still fly to the distant hill, or gather upon the land he has left behind, and every part of the landscape appears greener than the spot he stands on.”*

Sooner or later you will be obliged to take refuge in content ; and, lightly as you may now esteem it, to be thankful for content. I willingly admit, that I think a good deal of what you now experience is occasioned by a somewhat sudden expansion of mind ; by thoughts which lack expression ; fancies, which as yet can find no occupation ; feelings, which you do not yourself understand, and which you fear to have misunderstood by others. You cannot at present come in contact with intellect or sensibility, whether in books or persons, without feverish excitement : poetry, fiction, narrative, tragedy, whatsoever you read, has more than a written existence ; it has an influence, and a presence, both tangible and abiding. Imaginary

* Washington Irving.

characters do not come "like shadows, to depart;" you live with, and love them, far more than real ones; and the secret sigh of your heart is, "O for a world of such beings, to admire, imitate, and discourse with!" Now it may startle you to be told, that this is a very inferior enjoyment of intellect; that a much higher delight will be yours, when you shall have learned to value books in precise proportion as they elucidate correctly the heart and mind of your species; in other words, when you shall read and think, less to escape from mankind, than to be brought into closer contact with them, into more enlarged and kindly communion. Very few of the *great* imaginative writers are morbidly disposed; they may overtop their brethren in mind, but in heart they maintain a friendly fellowship.* It is no mark of su-

* "Homer and Shakspeare, and others with Homeric and Shakspearean souls, so far from being unfit for the gross atmosphere of human nature, breathed in it with lungs of easiest play:—soared in it like eagles, intersected it like swallows, serenely it like a calm, purified it like a storm, glittered in it like stars, shone over it like a sun, illuminated it like the light of morning, and darkened it like the fall of midnight."—ANONYMOUS.

periority, to lack interest in our fellow-creatures; and the mind which cannot cheerfully, and with full purpose, go from the world of thought and fancy to that of life and action, has yet to learn its fitting use, and true distinction. At your age I did not credit the possibility of such transfer; but I have since seen too many illustrious instances, to doubt, that the utmost refinement of taste, and the most enthusiastic love of literature, may subsist with a graceful and good-humored attention to inferior employments, homely duties, and ordinary associations. The ardent love of literature, though a healthy taste in itself, is not healthily exercised when it does not refresh our spirits, stimulate us to action, and, by invigorating our minds, reconcile us to whatsoever may be painful in our lot. A cultivated mind, accompanied by healthy sensibility, conscious that it knows of a region wherein it can always breathe "an ampler ether and diviner air," will not, on that account, be impatient of the grosser element by which it may habitually be surrounded. It can afford to suffer, to be an-

noyed, and entrenched upon. It bears an analogy to a religious spirit ; it "is a noble and imperial bird, that, sometimes driven down by the storm, yet keeps its plumes expanded and its eye on heaven, till, on the first gleam of sunshine, it shakes its wet and weary wing, and eagle-like, towers again to the sun."

What I have said of literature, applies equally to the love of nature ; and, begging you to apply the passage yet more emphatically to the tendency of true religion, I will quote some lines from a poem that has few fellows, and no superiors :*

" She can so inform
The mind that is within us, so impress
With quietness and beauty, and so feed
With lofty thoughts, that neither evil tongues,
Rash judgments, nor the sneers of selfish men,
Nor greetings where no kindness is, nor all
The dreary intercourse of daily life,
Shall e'er prevail against us, or disturb
Our cheerful faith, that all which we behold
Is full of blessings."

With all that I have said, I have not yet touched the root of the malady, or

* Tintern Abbey.

proposed any adequate remedy. I am not anxious, then, for the removal of your depression, or desirous that you should be happy, merely on account of your personal enjoyment; I desire it, mainly, because you cannot otherwise be *useful*; and your Christian profession, like a sword exposed to moisture, if it do not lose its edge, will certainly lose its polish. On this ground, my dear —, you must arouse from a lethargy not less destructive to the due performance of duty, than actual sin—nay, little short of actual sin itself. What! would you have “a world that lieth in wickedness,” a world of unalloyed felicity? Would you be a Christian Sybarite? Dare you murmur because the life of faith is not an eastern romance? Do you, in sober truth, desire to have your year all spring—your day all noon? So did not He “who pleased not himself;” so did not He who “had learned in whatsoever state he was therewith to be content,”—who knew how to suffer need, and, far harder task, knew also “how to abound.” Think of these things; and instead of praying for resignation under troubles which do not exist, pray to

have your heart filled with joy and thankfulness for the blessings which are showered upon you. If, in the mistaken spirit of an apostle, you shrink from contact with every thing that fastidiousness may call "common or unclean," where is the benevolence which bears to see, nay, which desires to see the misery which has no recommendation beyond its reality? If, in occasional intercourse with those who are ungraced with the charms of mind and manners, you manifest cold, impatient civility, and all but cherish dislike and disdain, where is the charity which "seeketh not her own, and endureth all things?" If, avowedly, and on system, you esteem none but the gifted, the distinguished, and the amusing, where is the spirit of Him whose gentlest words were ever to the weakest—who gave an everlasting memorial to one who had done "what she could?" If, just entered on life and your Christian career together, you already long for some bower of ease, and sigh for two heavens instead of one, where is the faith which professes to have here no continuing city—which proclaims, that it is enough for the servant to be as his

master, and the disciple as his lord? We all get wrong the moment we forget that this world is not our rest. Midnight is not a more effectual shroud for the landscape, than unbelief for divine things, when it interposes between them and our souls. Why else are we more anxious for seasons of enjoyment than for opportunities of usefulness? Why else do we call God our satisfying portion, yet grieve and murmur unless he satisfy us with a portion beside? Why else do we pronounce his favor to be life, and prove too often in action that we value every thing in life more than his favor?

“ 'Tis, by comparison, an easy task
Earth to despise; but to converse with Heaven—
This is not easy.”*

Yet let us seek that spirituality of mind which renders it possible—which, at once satisfied and sober-minded, is content that vanity should be inscribed on the world's best and brightest, because it has respect to “the recompense of reward”—the undefiled and unfading inheritance of God. I will

* Wordsworth.

now, my dear —, offer three suggestions for your assistance : I think you may find them beneficial. They have a threefold reference—religious, intellectual, and moral. Invigorate your soul, then, by frequent contemplations of the life of Christ, who, when “the world was all before him where to choose,” selected a path that led right through the vale of humiliation ; had the cross ever before him as the termination of the vista, the painful close of a toilsome pilgrimage. This, for your spiritual employment. Next, employ your understanding upon works of thought ; read moral philosophy as treated by sound authors ; the critical discussions, not of meagre minds on meagre subjects, but of men of genius on works of genius. This, for your mental remedy : intellectual abstractions afford the best counterpoise to a dreaming fancy. Lastly, occupy a stated, and as large a portion of your time as you can, in acting for others, and especially for those who “have no helper.” Study benevolence, in reference to your equals as well as inferiors ; in its passive form of forbearance, as well as its active guise of charity. Avoid

solitude. Arouse from reveries. Command your attention to fix on passing objects, and interest in them will by degrees follow. Task yourself to converse. Task yourself to listen to conversation. Withal, seek God's blessing on all your endeavors, and, ere long, the first sentence of this letter will cease to apply to my dearest —.

LETTER XII.

MY DEAR YOUNG FRIENDS,

I HAVE not been so long a sojourner in the household of which you are members, without becoming tenderly interested in the welfare of each; and as the days approach when our pleasant intercourse must be broken up, and to most of you I must become but a name and a remembrance—dear girls, suffer me to leave one general record of my regard.

This is my birthday; and feeling on the one hand how frail I am, and on the other how short my remaining life may be, can I be otherwise than serious? Beholding your youthful vigor, and remembering that as ye are, so once was I, can I be otherwise than admonitory? My feelings acquire a yet deeper

character from the circumstance, that only a few days since, the majority of your number publicly pledged yourselves to the fulfilment of your baptismal vows, and this, under a solemn sense of the duty and difficulty of so doing. To none was Confirmation a light thing, and the day on which it occurred was a day long to be remembered. Will it not be more? Will it not be the commencement of a new era in the life of each? Nay, will it not be the commencement of a new life itself? Shall the solemn sense of God's presence which pervaded your souls when assembled in his sanctuary, exhale like the dew—disperse like a cloud? Must the sweet serenity which now fills your hearts, while they are seeking him whose favor is life, be blighted, because that search becomes gradually intermitted—that favor more lightly esteemed? Must the sacred union which now binds you together, because striving to walk in one way you desire to walk in one spirit, to watch over, admonish, pray for, and love one another—must this fervent fellowship be jarred and disturbed? Shall the wind of vanity and dissension blow upon and scatter

it, leaving each to bear her own burden, to grieve, rejoice, succeed, or fall—alone? The very God of peace forbid! But “by whom shall Jacob arise, for he is small?” and with youthful fickleness added to human infirmity, both destined to be tried and drawn forth in a vain, bewildering, tempting, troubled world, who amongst you shall stand? Who shall hold on her way growing stronger and stronger, her eye fixed on the bright, if distant, goal of eternity? Who shall walk in the path of Christian duty, diverging neither to the right hand nor to the left—treading down alike the briars that would hinder, and the flowers that would allure? Who, having an eye to the great recompense of reward, shall esteem “the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt?” Who shall wage victorious warfare with a proud, ambitious spirit, cast down every high imagination, bring every thought into subjection to the cross of Christ, and in that despised object behold the fountain of all true glory? What unyielding temper shall be conformed to the meekness and gentleness of Christ? What “dry root” shall “grow as the lily?”

What unstable plant "cast forth its roots as Lebanon?" Will the bruised reed become a stately pillar, or the smoking flax "a burning and a shining light?" Will the day whereof "the light is neither clear nor dark," become "a day known to the Lord?" Who among you will "run and not be weary, will walk and not faint?" I know that similar questions have agitated your own minds,—I know that each in turn has said with despondency, "Alas! not I." Have I then suggested these obstacles only to dismay and dishearten? Would I in any mind discourage hope and implant doubt? Would I be to you a "grieving thorn and a pricking briar;"—a needless Micaiah? O no! The gospel states the difficulties of becoming a follower of Christ in plain terms, because it provides a sufficiency of strength to overcome them; and God is absolute in requiring our obedience, because royal in his promises of all that we need to enable us to obey. Our necessities may be many as the sands upon the sea-shore; our desires boundless as the ocean they encircle; our hopes and aspirations high as the heaven that looks

down upon them ; but in Him is a sufficiency of supply—infinite—unfathomable—unexplored. Were there a sin beyond the reach of divine mercy to pardon, or divine grace to subdue ; a temptation, out of which divine power could not deliver ; a loss that divine love could not remedy ; a wound it failed to heal ; a tear it could not dry, the attributes of Deity were tarnished—nay, he would cease to be God ! But what we so scantily and obscurely apprehend, he knows in all its wondrous magnitude ; even “the great love wherewith he hath loved us,” and his willingness “to help in every time of need.” He only demands our unlimited confidence, because he knows that we are dust, and feels that he is God. “He openeth his hand, and filleth all things living with plenteousness.” That we go on our way halting and mourning, stumbling and overcome, is not from deficiency of resource, but inadequacy of attainment ; not from being straitened in God, but from being straitened in ourselves. We have not, because we ask not, or because we ask amiss. We believe too little, we desire too little, we expect too little. Unbelief, dis-

guised as humility, supplicates, as though God were a miser, rather than what he is, a great and generous king. We walk through the rich fields of promise, contented to gather a few ears in our hands, and pass on our way still hungry, when by putting in the sickle of faith we might reap an abundant and abiding harvest; "bread, enough and to spare." You see how these views bear on the questions contained in a former part of my letter: O dearest girls, may you, through him who is "mighty to save," realize them in your own hearts and lives; find him, what myriads have found him before, "a very present help in time of trouble." Continued perplexities, a thousand discouragements connected with yourselves or others, will from time to time endeavor to persuade you, that "there is no help for you in God;" but such a suggestion plainly indicates its origin; though it do but whisper in your hearts, it is a whisper from the father of lies! The word "Impossible" was never yet breathed in heaven. How could it in the presence of God? Nay, as regards the promised operations of his grace, it might be banished by us on earth,

did we realize that all pervading power which continually watches over the interests of the human race.

Whether, then, you are cast down under a sense of inward evil, of anticipated trial, of apprehended declension, turn ever to this "strong hold," and turn as "prisoners of hope." Lean confidently on the everlasting arm, which will not, cannot fail you. Honor God by believing his word, judge him by his own assurances, not by your own fancies. Confidence that he is able and willing to perform them to you, is not presumption, if at the same time you seek and desire the dispositions to which they are attached. I think you would derive both instruction and encouragement from perusing the history of the kings of Judah in the second book of Chronicles ; less with an historical, than experimental reference. You will there see the intimate, the inseparable union, between dependence upon God for help, and victory in time of need ; between seeking his favor, and prospering in all things ; and though the victories and prosperity were temporal, they bear an

evident analogy to those essentially spiritual. The same remark will apply to the wars under Joshua. Indeed, the whole history of the Jews, from their leaving Egypt to their settlement in Canaan, may be termed an historical allegory, through which the Christian pilgrimage is distinctly and instructively perceptible.

And now, dear girls, suffer one brief hint, the only one I shall make of a practical nature. Religion is a living principle. It is compared by our Saviour to every thing that has a tendency to grow and increase; the single grain of mustard-seed became a spreading tree; the hidden leaven "leavened the whole lump;" and if the grain dispersed by the sower, varied even on the good ground in its springing, yet its least increase was manifold and abundant. Religion, divine in its nature, and real in its effect, is no idle, no dubious possession; if it "take root downwards," it will "bear fruit upwards."

"Its holy flame for ever burneth,
From heaven it came, to heaven returneth."

Partial, perhaps unperceived in its com-

mencement, in the end its dominion becomes universal ; extending to the thoughts and intents of the heart ; having reference to the whole being, body, soul, and spirit ; so stimulating to action, so purifying the affections, so renewing the motives, so strengthening weakness, so tempering harshness, that the object of its influence is emphatically termed a "new creature." That Christian is false to his principles, of whose life and conversation it can ever be inquired in doubt, "Whose is this image and superscription?" if he do not evidence, too plainly for any to misconceive, the spirit he has imbibed, the master whom he follows !

There are some among you to whom what I have written will not apply ; some, who may think that youth absolves them from being interested in the subject. Such I must more particularly address. Dear children, why should you hesitate or hang back, as though there were aught in the universe having claims or worthiness to be compared with God? Why will you be content to hear of him by the hearing of the ear, when you might apprehend him by the experience of

the heart? You see many around you, who, in different degrees, are seeking and finding Him, who is "the covert from the storm, and the shadow from the heat;" the great Shepherd of Israel, who leads his flock to green pastures and still waters; the gentle Teacher whose "doctrine drops as the rain, whose speech distils as the dew; as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass." Why should not you seek and find him too? Why should not you too be enabled to say of this gracious Being, "How great is his goodness, and how great is his beauty!" The unwillingness is not in him, but in yourselves; the "wisdom that descendeth from above" has tamed and consecrated hearts as young and giddy as any of yours can be; infant lips have lisped hosannas to him who bringeth salvation; and infant feet have "run the way of his commandments;" little ones among men have become little ones of the kingdom of God, and according to their capacity, have delighted in him as their father and their portion. Remember, God will no more be mocked by children than by their elders; if

they reject and despise him, he will reject and despise them, and the youngest, who have had the opportunity of knowing him, must perish if they know him not! And does there yet remain any other to whom an especial word is needed?—any, who have had for many years “line upon line, and precept upon precept,” and yet are not taught by the teaching of the Spirit? Remember the added responsibility which rests upon your heads! Remember the fearful doom of the son who said to his father, “I go, sir, and went not:” of those to whom the prophet’s words were a pleasant but soon forgotten song! Ah! why should your souls resemble Gideon’s fleece, dry amidst descending dews, when, would you seek it with full purpose of heart, they might be as “a watered garden.” Be no longer contented with vague desires and uncertain hopes; arise as to a great work, which there remains, perhaps, little time to accomplish. Seek to be quickened if you are dead; to be roused if you are sleeping; to be alarmed if falsely secure; to be established if wavering; that you may be enabled to say with the men of

Samaria, "Now we believe, not because of thy saying, for we have heard him ourselves, and know that he is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world."

We now form a large and happy family : did it ever strike you that when once scattered we shall be reunited only after death, and for one purpose? May he who alone is able to keep us from falling, and preserve us blameless to the day of Jesus Christ, grant that such reunion may be joyful ; that one of the many mansions in the kingdom of the Father may receive us all, there to form but one family again !

To each, and all, I now bid an affectionate farewell.

LETTER XIII.

MY DEAR —,

THE interest excited in my mind by our late conversation, makes me anxious to fulfil my promise of writing without delay.

The present is an eventful period in your life ; upon it, for aught we know to the contrary, hang the issues of life and death—life and death eternal. The convictions and desires which now occupy your mind, are manifest proofs that the Spirit of God is striving with your spirit, drawing you secretly, but I hope, strongly also, to surrender yourself wholly and cheerfully, to his service and his guidance. The waters are troubled, I would hope, preparatory to your everlasting healing ; and light has dawned upon your heart, in order, I trust, that it may “shine more and

more unto the perfect day ;" that so, you may become a child of light, and walk in light, and no more stumble in darkness. Beware, then, how you check or slight these gracious influences, lest he who waits to be to you the comforter, be grieved, and depart and hide himself for a while, or perhaps for ever. Cherish these good desires and sacred emotions, that they may not terminate in mere desires and emotions. Seek earnestly that they may "strike root downwards, and bear fruit upwards," even "the fruits of the Spirit," in season and in abundance. If a single seed of grace has fallen into your heart, ask him who is the great husbandman of the soul, to "watch over and water it every moment, lest any hurt it ;" lest the deceitfulness of earthly delights impede its growth ; lest vain imaginations, or idle habits, devour it ere it spring up ; or, lest after shooting forth in green and vigorous strength, temptations, like the scorching sun, wither it for ever. It is no light matter to be a Christian. Nothing, not the union of all earthly power and human advantages, can make, or keep you one. It requires an exercise of

omnipotent strength, the strength of him who called light out of darkness, and brought water from the flinty rock. Fear, therefore, continually for yourself, but look to God and fear nothing. From the first moment of his pilgrimage to the last, the Christian has but one point of safety, one rock of refuge, one place of shelter, and its name is "Constant Dependence." Your task is, ever to look upwards, and inwards, that so you may be preserved from presumption and despair. Never, surely, was any one more happily placed for becoming "wise unto salvation." Spiritual instruction is, indeed, very nigh; and counteracting influences are removed very far. God, by his dispensations, seems saying to you, "Only incline your ear, hear, and your soul shall live. I will instruct thee, and teach thee in the way that thou shalt go. I will guide thee with mine eye. Be ye not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding. Ask me, and I will show thee great and mighty things which thou knowest not."

I would advise you to store your memory, as opportunity offers, with various petitionary

passages of Scripture, especially from the Psalms, that in the intervals of occupation, in your walks, and in your retirements, you may be furnished with prayers indited by that Spirit who knew the necessities and temptations of the human heart. You will find this habit of silent, momentary, ejaculatory petition, a great means of preserving that sedateness of feeling and quietness of deportment, which, even in the vivacity of youth, should characterize the Christian.

Dear —, I do hope God will strengthen you that you may be able to stand, and at once and for ever turn your steps towards this narrow but pleasant path, which issues in rest eternal and glorious. What better can you do? Is it not, indeed, a reasonable service? Is not the present the best time to engage in it? Only think of the different retrospect you will have on a death-bed. Supposing (fearful supposition!) that your present desires wear off, and that, notwithstanding, you should be saved at a ninth or an eleventh hour, think of the remorse prevented, the active good effected, the privileges enjoyed, the blessings diffused, by those

who walk with God "from youth even to hoar hairs." Think of the temptations they escape, the sorrows they never feel, all suffered, and all felt, by those who enter the vineyard in later life. Think again of the fearful uncertainty which involves the future, and resolve, determine, act—now. Ask God to enlarge your heart, and set you in the way of his commandments; tell him you have no might, but plead his promise "to increase strength;" to "strengthen the spoiled against the strong;" to tread down your spiritual enemies under your feet; to arm you with the whole armor of God, and then teach you how to use it. Never fear that his gracious ear will be wearied with the tale of your sins, your wants, and your weaknesses. May he lead you into all truth, enable you to walk humbly, and therefore surely, and now, in these the bright and joyous hours of life, unite you to himself in that bond which can never be broken; which gives power over the vicissitudes of time and the world, and even over death and hell! May he enable you not merely to begin, but to end well; that having overcome through

faith, you may inherit all those royal promises, the fulfilment of which, if completed in heaven, commences here below. One thing is certain ; of vacillation you will assuredly repent, of decision, never. You may twine your affections round the reeds of earth, and build towering hopes upon the sand, and seek after worldly vanities as after hid treasure, but the end of these things is sure—disappointment and destruction. And the end of a contrary conduct is sure also—glory, honor, immortality—all comprised in one weighty expression—eternal life ! May God, who is, I trust, beginning a good work in you, bless and keep you by the glorious working of his effectual Spirit !

LETTER XIV.

I WRITE you the promised letter, dearest —, because you request it so earnestly, that I am induced to believe it will give you pleasure. But as I am not aware that you hold any opinions which admit of discussion, or encourage feelings which a friend would advise you to suppress, I can only offer a few general remarks on general subjects.

Thanks to the divine blessing on able instruction, your heart is already decided on the most momentous point that can engross the thoughts of a rational being, and you have acquired a taste for study, which predisposes you to continue the cultivation of your mind. These are two things to be thankful for—two, on which to ground hope for the future, both here and hereafter.

My dear love, think often on this question, "What is the true end of education?" To store the memory with facts? to grace the person with accomplishments? to enrich the understanding with noble sentiments? These are but the means. The true end of education is, to fit a thinking being for the part she is to perform in life, as the true end of life is to prepare the same being for eternity; so that merely to be well informed is not to be well educated. The question is not how much knowledge we possess; but are we disposed to render it available to moral improvement? subservient to practical duty? Will others benefit by our education, as well as ourselves? When you leave school you become a member of society, and, as such, the duties of society devolve upon you. Ascertain then, first, what you can do, and next, what you are especially required to do. Thinking soberly of ourselves, does not interdict us from forming a correct estimate of our powers, preparatory to making use of them.

The first thing I advise you then to do when you return home, is, to study yourself, and

study your duties. I shall be grieved and disappointed too, if you do not pursue a steady and systematic course of reading, to be digested by thought, and applied by observation; and I shall be equally disappointed, if you do not manage, that the sphere of thought shall not trench upon that of action. Action is, after all, the main business of our lives; we are to "*work* while it is called to-day;" and thought is worth nothing, unless it lead to, and embody itself in practice.

With regard to reading I will only give this general hint. Leave for some time the books you would merely like to read, and content yourself at present with those which are emphatically desirable; those which may be termed foundation reading. In saying this I do not mean to exclude poetry, for I think poetry will do you good; but still take standard, not superficial poetry. There may come a day when you have little time for grave studies, or even for studies of any kind: when, too, your mind may require unbending and soothing; keep the flowers of literature till then, for then they will cheer and not enervate.

Of course, my love, I know nothing of the kind of life you are destined to lead, or of the society in which you will move ; but beware of two things—of so estimating what is intellectual, that you turn with disgust from that which is common-place ; and of so tolerating the common-place, that you lose your zest for what is superior. When you are brought most painfully and frequently in contact with mediocrity, in addition to the effort which principle will induce, (the effort not to manifest contempt,) strive not to let your mind lower its own estimate of excellence, or slacken its desires after cultivation. Again, when brought most delightfully in conjunction with mental superiority, strive not to consider all qualities unconnected with intellect, as worthless and uninteresting. Each in its own place. The woman of active benevolence, however meanly endowed with the gifts of education, shall have her reward ; and she who is enabled to perform more intellectual duties, or common duties more intellectually, must see to it, that she be found as active in practice and as simple in motive. But do not fancy I want you to

get a taste for mediocrity. "Covet earnestly the best gifts ;" only be not unmindful of the yet "more excellent way." Should it ever so happen that in the course of life you are obliged to associate closely with gossips, redouble your efforts to cultivate and refine your mind, not out of contempt, but as a counterpoise to their influence. Only "let all things be done in order," in love, and in the "meekness of wisdom."

I know you will not be satisfied unless I advert to the subject of religion; yet, knowing the privileges which you enjoy, I feel as though it were needless for me to add a single word; and all I can say, is comprised in one brief observation—that unless the habit of the Christian's mind be that of seeking grace, the history of his life will soon be that of falling from it. His stability lies not in determination, in recollection, in knowledge; but in present and continual receiving. I must, however, conclude, I have written inadequately, but from a sincere desire to give you pleasure.

Farewell, dearest —; I trust a long, a happy, and a useful life is before you; that

your path will always tend upwards, and your Christian progress be that of going "from strength to strength;" till at last you reach that holy place of which we read last night, and of which I trust you think often. Realize "the rest that remaineth for the people of God;" but, O remember that such "rest" is not to be found, perfectly at least, on this side the grave. Again, farewell, and believe me,

Your faithful and affectionate friend.

LETTER XV.

MY DEAREST —,

BEFORE I was aware you had discovered for yourself that "earthliness is stamped upon emotion," I had determined to address you on the subject; suspecting, what I now find to be the truth, that you were under its influence—yes, its delicious but dangerous influence. If, however, your note gives me a correct estimate of your state of mind; if, as you assure me, you "keep a constant and vigilant watch over your feelings," and make it a subject of prayer that your attachment "may not prove a snare, but an incitement to the pursuit of all that is truly estimable and excellent," it is sufficient; I only trust, that the object who has rendered this watchfulness and these petitions

necessary, will not, for any gratification of a personal nature, throw hindrances in your way, but will rather strive with you, to subordinate what in itself need not be eradicated. It was utterly impossible that your whole moral existence should not have been stirred—shaken—thrown into confusion, by one who approached you through the medium of your understanding; who annihilated at once every barrier raised by disparity of age and circumstance, and placed you, as yet a girl, in full possession of the benefits and pleasures of equality. Though I know full well, that the character of your friend is invested with the sunny haze that fancy only can bestow, and though I believe you are at this moment on enchanted ground, yet, if you will not make an idol of one, and fall asleep on the other, I do not think you need be very uneasy at the change which has passed upon your heart. Yet is it a critical moment in your life; and sober and steadfast as your style of character is, you are in danger; not so much in the eyes of human observers, as in the sight of Him “who searcheth the heart.” The quiet sur-

face of your feelings has been disturbed, sweetly, brightly, imperceptibly, but still disturbed : that repose of mind which “looked neither before nor after,” and was satisfied with knowledge for its own sake ; which loved without excitement, enjoyed without tumult, dreamed little of the world without, and still less of the busier world within ; that state which is most aptly called contented cheerfulness, has passed away. Another, and a stronger spirit has been evoked, and now rules you. Emotion is its name. As yet, it waves the wand, and wears the guise of perfect happiness, and you are loath to distrust its bright and many promises. As yet it has brought you little beyond the knowledge of good ;—but oh ! beware, lest there follow the knowledge and experience of evil also ! It need not be so—though there is only one power in earth or in heaven able to regulate its influence. That power is Holy Love. Now, at this instant, these two principles are struggling for dominion in your heart. The contemplation of God was, and in the main is now, your portion ; but his territory has been invaded, and he is not so palpably,

singly, and simply, felt to be your satisfying portion. Formerly, your heart instinctively and naturally mounted upwards; God here, and God there, was emphatically the resting-place for your thoughts, whether sad or joyous; and even when your religious feelings were comparatively torpid, it was not from the intervention of any rival interest. In point of conduct, principle, habit, and sentiment, you are still unchanged; but a Christian will try himself by a more delicate test, and the "sword of the Spirit pierces even to the discerning of the thoughts of the heart."

Dearest ———, whither wander those thoughts first and oftenest? Alas, for the frail and deceitful spirit of our nature! ever starting aside like a broken bow! ever making itself wings to fly away from God, its great and all-sufficient glory! defying dust and despising Deity! I speak from memory, alas! I speak from experience, when I tell you that there is a devotedness of affection inconsistent with the ascendancy of religion in the soul. It can retain its hold and regulate the outward deportment, while

the fire may be decaying on the altar; we may continue to call Christ master, yet serve him with slackened zeal; the Holy Spirit our comforter, yet seek and find our comfort elsewhere; and God our father, yet approach him with abated love. What must be the consequence? God will put thorns in our pillow, lest we sleep the sleep of death; some worm (ask not whence it must come) will be sent to the root of the gourd; delight and comfort will vanish like "the hasty summer fruit," and that which we deemed our "crown of pride," shall prove to be a "fading flower." Those who never sought, who never professed to give their hearts to God, may perchance "join themselves to idols," and be "let alone;" it is otherwise with those who call themselves his children. *Their* hearts, supremely, undividedly, unwaveringly he will have, and as often as they are withdrawn and withheld, it matters not by what influence, however sweet, however enchanting, he says in anger, "Do ye provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are ye stronger than he?"

I believe that emotion, innocent, nay,

praiseworthy, when subordinate, does, in its supremacy, rob God of more honor than any other rival admitted into the human heart: it goes more directly to pluck him from his throne, and substitute the creature. Ambition, desire of fame, of pleasure, of wealth—devotedness to literature, to the works of art or nature—tend to the same point; but they do so less avowedly, and under more restriction. Inordinate affection, fair as may be its guise, and captivating its song, is more essential idolatry than self-seeking in any other shape. In its undisguised excess it says to the beloved object, "Let me be your god; trust in my shadow; eat of my fruit; give me your heart; Jehovah must be your salvation, but let me be your happiness; a portion of your time, your attention, your service, he must have, but your daily, hourly thoughts, your dreams, your feelings, let them all be of me—of mine." Stripped of its subtleties, this is the language of the bramble that would be our king, and in the end fire comes out of it to destroy us; yes, and itself too. Had we the history of all the attachments that, since the human

heart began to beat, have either "been violently destroyed, or have silently gone out of mind," the majority of disappointments might be traced to this self-consuming property of emotion. It is thus, that even in their formation, so many friendships, otherwise valuable and rightly placed, contain within themselves the elements of their own destruction. Setting aside Christian principle, self-interest requires a subordination of the heart to the understanding, for daily experience proves that regulated feeling can alone be lasting feeling. But on this point, and on the external evils arising from over-indulged affection, I need say little; in characters like yours, they will be less apparent and influential. Perhaps it is not fair to inquire whether your peculiar duties, although connected with mental cultivation, are quite as interesting as they were? Whether the companions that suited and satisfied you before, suit and satisfy you quite as well now? Whether no reveries, no sweet, but in reality idle remembrances, intrude upon graver studies? Whether this new language of the heart has not somewhat spoiled your taste

for other languages, dead and living? To ask these questions is not quite fair, because native good sense and Christian conscientiousness have counteracted what, in a weaker or more impetuous character, would manifest itself in outward dereliction of duty. I believe that such has not been your case; and your friend may thank you for this proof of regard. I believe that you have exerted all your former application, though to exert it has required more than a former effort. Deeper and less tangible are the consequences of engrossing emotion in a temperament like your own. Hidden, noiseless, and unsuspected by man, therefore by man unproved, yet beware, yet watch, yet be very jealous, lest he who sets "our secret sins in the light of his countenance" condemn you for idolatry. To another I might use a thousand arguments, but to you, as I began, so would I close with one—fear lest it induce Christian declension.

My dearest —, there is not, as you wish there were, "a royal road to subdue overpowering emotion:" here, as in every other duty, we must walk in "the narrow way" of

self-denial, holy resolution, vigilant watchfulness, and earnest prayer. We may, however, find great advantage in studying those passages of Scripture which most emphatically declare God's right to the *first* place in the heart of man, and man's incalculable and innumerable obligations to surrender it. We should, moreover, contrast, in every possible way, the rival claimants for our supreme love—the creature and Christ; the broken reed and the sure foundation; the empty cistern, and the ever-springing well; the deceived and the deceiver, and Him who is the truth and the life—Him who is faithful and everlasting—Him who is ever-present—Him who has all power—Him who gave his life to prove his love, and now lives to render that love efficacious! These are the contemplations wherewith to fetch a vain heart back from its wanderings; these are the cords that must bind the sacrifice to the altar, so strongly, that it shall not dare, so sweetly, that it shall not desire to move. The blessing of him who “strengtheneth the spoiled against the strong,” who is “able by his mighty working to subdue all things unto

himself," even the wild desires and rebel feelings of the human heart ; the blessing of him who says, " let your moderation be known unto all men ; " who promises his glory to those only who " overcome," to the patient runners in the Christian race, to the faithful combatants in that hidden strife accomplished between the flesh and the spirit ; the blessing of him whose nature, name, life, being, death, were love, be with you, dearest girl, at once as a sanctifying and stimulating influence. Call me not, think me not unkind, because I reason with you thus calmly. Alas ! it has been for my own benefit, even more than yours, that I have written thus fully. I always find it good to exhort others, for in so doing I exhort myself, and I feel that I need exhortation. O false human heart ! yielding as water to the world, insensible as adamant to the voice of God ! frail as a bubble, wandering as a silly bird ! O seductive, treacherous world ! where the loveliest flower enfolds a canker-worm, the sweetest feelings grow surrounded by thorns, and the best blessings either induce sin, or conceal a snare ! O glorious state, and coming time ! wherein

all evil shall be done away, and all good perfected ! where the intensity of human emotion shall no longer interfere with the bright serenity of holy love, but both be conjoined in one inexplicable bond ! where myriads shall be loved, as now we love our friends ; and friends be loved, as now we ought to love our God ; and God be loved, and admired, worshipped, understood, and delighted in, with a reverence and a rapture, an affinity and a comprehension, with human sentiment purified, and divine capacity superadded, more than ever saints conceived, more than even angels knew !

Realize thoughts like these, dearest —, as a counterpoise to vain imaginations ; and when praying that an abundant entrance may be ministered to yourself, remember one who loves you well, yet desires to be your faithful friend.

LETTER XVI.

MY DEAR —,

FROM what I have observed and heard of you, and from what I recollect of myself at your age, I think I understand your present state of feeling, your tastes, desires, opinions, and sentiments. From having drawn them out into action, and from having enjoyed and suffered their consequences, I know too whence they come, and whither they tend. To this you will attribute my affectionate anxiety on your account.

My love, you are ambitious ;—vague, restless, ever-changing desires occupy your mind, and your heart is full of those fair shadows with which romance disguises reality. What kind of distinction is best

worth having, you have not yet decided ; but, as least unattainable in the present state of society, perhaps your thoughts fix most frequently on intellectual celebrity. I say celebrity, for I do not believe that intellectual acquirements would fulfil your vision. Your judgment is convinced of the necessity of spiritual religion ; occasionally you are touched with a sense of its worth and sweetness, but you do not believe that it is in itself all-sufficient to make you happy, and your heart rebels frequently against its requirements. You are well aware that you cannot compromise with God ; “ that you are not your own ; that, as “ bought with a price,” you are bound to surrender all you are, and all you possess, to his service ; to account your talents a delegated trust, for the use of which you are responsible, and the glory of which appertains to him ! Now this loving God, with “ all the understanding,” is a stumbling block at which thousands have stumbled, and tens of thousands have fallen to rise no more. To toil, deserve, and acquire, without the stimulus supplied by personal ambition, or an exulting conscious-

ness of superiority ; to receive praise and render it to God untouched ; to strive for victory and inscribe the trophy with the name of another—this you feel is “a hard saying.” Yet, herein lies true happiness and true distinction. Personal aggrandizement is the stately phantom, of which desire to glorify God was once the warm and living substance. It expired in Paradise with Adam’s innocence, but divine grace can revive it even here ; and it starts into full life and beauty, in that region where each glorified spirit casts his crown at the foot of Him who gave it. * Was not David, making magnificent preparations for the temple which another was to build, and renouncing even the glory of those preparations, nobler and more distinguished than the same David numbering his people from vain-glorious pride ? My love, you are dazzled with the dew-drops of earth, because you do not raise your eyes to the sun in heaven. The queen of Sheba thought no more of the glory of her own court, when she had seen the surpassing excellence of Solomon’s ; and Paul, after he

* 1 Chron. xix. 10—20.

knew him who alone "hath life and immortality," could cheerfully "account all things but loss" for the excellency of that knowledge. Love, the constraining love of Christ, can alone render this self-renunciation easy and delightful—but it can do so; can enable a soul really to like, and rest contented with, life's most secluded path, and most unobtrusive occupations. But do not misunderstand me, and suppose that this renders the cultivation of our talents unlawful, or unnecessary. Never let indolence, as an excuse for supineness, say to vanity, as Balak did to Balaam, "Thy God hath kept thee back from honor." Had you the mind of an angel, religion would not circumscribe its exercise: it would allow you to know, and desire to know; to learn, and determine to learn—all that art, imagination, and science have placed within human reach. One thing religion certainly does, it claims a right to prescribe the motive by which we shall be actuated, and the object at which we shall aim; but surely, the glory of "Him who filleth all things," is no mean motive, and the everlasting welfare of our fellow-

creatures, no unworthy object. Besides, with this apparent subjection, it entwines our happiness ; and in exchange for the wild liberty of living to ourselves, it offers a joy which the world cannot give, a peace which it cannot take away.

But I have overlooked one material point in the argument. Distinction is not, as David says, of ourselves : " It cometh neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south, but God is the judge : He putteth down one and setteth up another." Anxiety, therefore, on this point, is vain even on the ground of probabilities, which, in regard to woman, are as one to ten thousand against her attaining it. Again, if an early desire of distinction has often been the pledge and concomitant of genius, it has yet oftener been associated with presumptuous mediocrity. I am, however, tired of argument ; so, I doubt not, are you ; let us therefore forget this present world, and realize that coming day when God shall manifest that all which has been " highly esteemed among men," has, in his sight, been " abomination." Would you then be some spark-

ling wit, or admired poet, or erudite scholar, who, having wholly sought his own glory, and wholly received his reward in this life, has nothing further to expect ; or the Christian, who, with one talent or with five, has “occupied for his Lord?” What you would wish to be then, resolve to be now. Fame’s trumpet will be silent in that day, and the approbation of God seen to be what it is even now—all that confers distinction. Read the first four chapters of the first of Corinthians as often as you are tempted to covet the pride of life, or the “honor that cometh from men.” I do not expect that your heart will agree with my present statements ; but I hope for the future ; I hope for a blessing on the privileges which you are now enjoying ; I hope, too, that you are not indisposed to ask, “What is truth?” at a higher tribunal than that of human reason, and with a more teachable spirit than that of him who first asked the question. One thing you can do ; you can, by a painful effort, but one well worthy of being made, resolve to read neither poetry nor fiction till your mind is steadied. Dr. Johnson says, “It is easier to

be abstemious than to be temperate ;” I think *you* would find it easier to abstain altogether, than to taste moderately. If, however, you cannot make this resolution, at least read neither poetry nor fiction that will kindle and increase the fancies and desires of which your heart is already too full ; at least let it be the fiction fullest of truth, and the poetry fullest of thought. I now bid you farewell, assuring you of my affectionate interest in your welfare.

LETTER XVII.

MY DEAREST —,

WHAT you state obscurely, was well expressed to me the other day by a young friend, whose feelings correspond in many points with your own. "I am convinced," was her language, "that my ambitious motives are wrong, but I feel that without them I should be miserable, and lose all power of exertion." Now, in spite of the beguiling subtleties with which pride invests this long-
ing after pre-eminence, and dependence upon opinion, they are, as principles of action, founded in meanness and weakness. I will not now examine them in a religious point of view, I will merely analyze them in their birth, and in their tendency, as opposed to every thing noble and honorable, lovely

and of good report. With all your affection and good nature, you are now, my dear —, as often as opportunity admits, (and a school-life admits of many,) enacting the successful rival. The desire to know exceeds in your mind the desire of knowledge; the love of excelling greatly overbalances the love of excellence; to pass your companions, to be acknowledged clever, to win prizes, no matter for what, so it do but include competition, and procure triumph; this is the little Babylon you are now building, careless, ignorant perhaps I should rather say, of consequences. But while you are thus adding fancy to fancy, and aim to aim, what is the first evil that ensues? Inability to be disinterested in any point that involves the renunciation of superiority. Self, in any other form, you could sacrifice, but praise, credit, estimation, these are as the apple of your eye, and whoso touches them, irritates and offends. The power of sympathizing with your companions is next affected; their success is your defeat, their gain your loss; their superiority is a stumbling-block in the way of your preferment, their inferiority a

stepping-stone to your progress ;—you *cannot* cordially love, and desire to assist, the rivals you are straining every nerve to overcome and throw into the shade. I have your own testimony as to the tendency of rivalry to produce impatience and irritability ; alas ! in its maturity, it bears even deadlier fruit, “clusters of gall”—hatred ! envy ! strife ! and revenge ! You probably work very diligently, my dear —, nay, unless the one holy motive of action, recognition of God, were to stimulate you, your energies would probably flag, and every other excitement would in comparison be as cold water after an ardent cordial. But is there not inherent weakness in every principle which depends for exercise upon external agency ? which is not sufficient for itself at once as a motive and a reward ? Now this longing after pre-eminence depends for its very existence on opinion, the opinion of every one who comes in contact with you ; a breath creates from these opinions a bubble of triumph, but the same breath can also dissipate the bubble, and then you are left without resource. Again, if you are thus dependent upon

opinion, your happiness must necessarily be unstable ; for the suffrages that might content you at one time, will not at another ; the rainbow recedes as you follow it ; alas ! it fades too : that which appeared an eminence before you climbed it, appears, when climbed, a mole-hill. What seems a star sparkling in a mossy hall, attracts your eye, you run towards the bank and return with a tiny worm ! To be the accredited head of your twelve schoolfellows would now content you, and like a miniature Wolsey, you would say, "I've touched the highest point of all my greatness ;" but if a thirteenth appeared, superior to yourself, your past honor would be worthless, and you must recommence the old course of strife, anxiety, and emulation. My dear ——, fancy yourself a woman, and in the world, actuated by your present motives and desires, just as ardent for pre-eminence, and just as sensitive to opinion. You will be incapable of any deep affection, because characters will solely be estimated by one standard — their appreciation of yourself. Friends will be sought and retained merely as they minister to your gratification. Sim-

plicity and sincerity must be undermined. You will give praise in order to receive it back. You will pay attention, study to be agreeable, and adapt yourself to society, and form, or at least avow your sentiments,—do in short, every thing, less from feelings of natural interest, and consciousness of propriety, than from perpetual reference to the effect which pleasing others will have upon their opinion of you. Your very sacrifices will “partake of the nature of the selfishness they appear to renounce.” The re-action—the receiving as much again—will form in all things the main matter of consideration. In duty, even in Christian duty, the eye of man will fearfully supersede the presence of God. You will strive most willingly against those sins and habits which most affect your estimation in the sight of others; you will engage most heartily in those occupations which bring with them the present and palpable reward of human praise—that well-named “opiate of the heart,” the powerful stimulus of a season, which exerts eventually a benumbing, deadening, deadly influence. But I hope better things for you, my love;

things which accompany salvation: only seriously consider your feelings, not merely in their present operation, but in their future tendency; and O beseech God to give you ability and willingness to desire the honor that cometh from Him; the glory that results from his favor; the fullness of joy which springs from his approbation, even when unaccompanied by the approbation of man. O that the day may come to you, and to myself, wherein we shall be able to feel, from the inmost soul, "He is our praise;" when we shall faithfully lay at his footstool that choicest gem, the estimation we hold in the sight of others, and say, with sincerity, "There, Lord, that is thine. It is thou hast given us power to get this wealth; not unto us, not unto us, but unto thee, and to thy grace be all the honor and glory."

My dearest —, farewell.

LETTER XVIII.

MY DEAR —,

I do tremble for you, and I would have you tremble for yourself! With subtlety the enemy of souls has prevailed against you. Blinded by his enchantments, you discern neither the path in which you are walking, nor the precipice to which it leads. In spirit you are alienated from God; you have forsaken the fountain of life; you have forgotten your resting-place; your heart is full of idols, your mind of vain fancies; you delight no longer in holy contemplations, or useful exertions; if you continue in duty, it is coldly, cautiously, grudgingly; the eye of your soul is dim, and the pulse of your soul scarcely beats. How know you that you live? Only by this—you are filled with wretchedness and

remorse ; for this be thankful. It were a double wo to be at once sinful and happy. My friend, you have deceived yourself ; yet in thus saying, I do not impeach your sincerity, for you *were* in earnest, (O grief that you are not so now !) but, ignorant of the depths of your own heart, and of the deeper depths of Satan, you expected the first onset to gain the victory. You ceased to look to your Captain ; carelessness induced a surprise, surprise surrender ; you are now wounded and a captive ; your sword is broken, your banner is torn, your strength is gone from you ; and your hope, where is it ? You forgot that he who girdeth on his harness should not boast like him that putteth it off. You forgot that the Christian race and warfare are to be run and fought every day, and all day, unto the end of life. You dreamed of rest here ; you exulted in the past ; you over-enjoyed the present ; you heeded not the future : one earthly delight after another (all I grant refined) stole into the secret place of your soul, and by little and little, circumscribed the dominion of God ;—his throne is yet there, but where is he, the king ? You

have not openly renounced your allegiance to him, but where is your loyal service? You call him master, so did one who was a betrayer; nay, you call yourself a child—should you not rather say a hireling? Alas, alas! a Christian, when bereft of the quickening influence of grace, is the most mournful of all earth's ruins! The loss of reason ranks man with the broken column, and the deserted city; but the absence of God's Spirit, after it has once been imparted, renders him far more desolate and degraded. He has "a name to live, and yet is dead;" he is an altar without an offering; a temple without a priest; a victim without a heart; a censer without incense; a lamp extinguished; a tree hiding its fruitlessness with fair leaves; he is the deceptive image, instead of the living David! You know this statement to be true; but it is only yourself, and the very few who, because they love, have studied you, that know it. Yet of those few scarcely one would dare to tell it you. Therefore I do so. May God point, nay, barb the arrow, that it may enter so abidingly into your soul, that no hand, save his, may avail to draw it

forth ; no balm but his heal the wound it leaves.

My friend, what matters it that your present path is a primrose one, if by leading as it does from God, it issue at length in everlasting destruction? What matters it that the objects which engross your supreme regard are lovely? That your idols are of the purest gold? I know you would not barter your birthright for a mess of pottage : even had you been Judas, you would not have sold your master for money ; nothing coarse or common would tempt you to endanger your soul's welfare ; you do compliment God by superseding him with the choicest goods earth can offer. They are all glittering and glorious, the things for which you are risking heaven—the triumph and the enjoyment of affection ; (O the universe of snares hid in that single word !) the stirrings of internal power ; the longings after intellectual distinctions ; the seductions of literature, its prohibited ground, that on which the tree of life may not grow ; those gay companionships and excitements, of which pride and vanity are the base and capital, the foundation and

the top-stone—Yes, I know them all well, too well. You have looked back upon your old world, looked upon it through the enchanter's mist, and Olivet, Lebanon, and Calvary, appear in comparison sombre and insipid. Your Abana and Pharpar seem more lucid streams than Cedron and Siloah. But you have not yet (you may suggest) abandoned the garden of the church, for the high places of the world—no, you are only gliding towards the boundary ; only tampering with the restraints which prevent your egress. Your pursuits, your habits, your friends, your sentiments—yes, they are still Christian ;—the poison is at work silently, but does it work the less surely ? Your cheek has not the hue of death—no, it has attacked your vitals first. The enemy has left the out-works free :—why ? he has gained the citadel. But you do not meditate, as yet you abhor the thought of, open apostacy ; you mourn even over hidden declension—yes, you dare not do otherwise ; you know what death and judgment will be to the forsakers and forgetters of God :—fear restrains you ; you are like a child, quiet from the dread of

punishment. But your heart—does that never stretch its chain? Your will—does that feel the yoke easy? Your lips—do they recommend the Christian service to others, as gentle and delightful? as perfect freedom? It was so once—true; and not long since—sad as true; and it will be so again;—ah! so have myriads thought; and, comforted by the inference, have proceeded smoothly in each fatal path; they have said, “yet a little more sleep, yet another sweet or splendid dream, yet one last enjoyment of forbidden pleasures, and then we will return, awake, bid farewell.” Did they so? Yes; they returned from that path; they awoke from that sleep; they bade adieu to those pleasures—in eternity, not on earth.

The originating cause of all Christian declension, is self-confidence; but you, more than most human beings, should unite vigilance and self-distrust. In your temperament there is such an intimate connection between the inward spirit and the outward act, that your deportment is not the test of your heart, but your heart that of your life. Good habits have not in you a self-supporting, in-

dependent existence ; they are literal results, mere symbols, arbitrary expressions of paramount feeling ; consequently, if that feeling, whatever it be, intermit but a day, or an hour, such intermission manifests itself externally. Again ; secondary motives, so powerful in most minds, are in yours unavailing ; to your wild and wayward spirit, every principle short of religious principle, and that in active operation, is like arrows darted against the scales of the leviathan. Now this you have latterly overlooked. Finding yourself comparatively tamed and tranquilized, your views of life sobered, your desires changed, your tastes new moulded, your imagination somewhat calmed, you hastily imagined all danger past ; that you were too completely an altered being ever again to be the one you had been. The storm subsided, and you supposed the ocean would swell no more ; fire ceased to issue from the crater, and you deemed the volcano exhausted ; the whirlwind passed away, and you forgot its fury and its effects. Temptation has undeceived you. That ocean has yet, you find, its dark and troubled depths ; that volcano,

you see, is yet unspent ; that whirlwind can be replaced by another. O my friend ! characters of softer, meeker mould, make more progress and do more good, with far less religion than will suffice for a being whose " events are emotions ;" whose principles are impulses ; whose feelings are passions ; whose changes are contradictions ; to whose whole moral existence enthusiasm is a never setting sun. How can one thus constituted continue, even by comparison, a gentle, lowly, loving Christian, but by an influence, powerful in its nature and perpetual in its operation, even the influence of divine grace daily recognized and daily received ? The manna in the wilderness, an instructive emblem for all Christians, is affectingly appropriate to your case ; on its fresh and frequent gathering depends, not merely your spiritual health, but your spiritual existence : nothing will atone for the loss of it, or nourish in its stead. Call it not, like the Jews of old, " light food," for in the shape of prayer and meditation it is bread, the bread that must sustain your life. To some, the Christian pilgrimage may, with peculiar emphasis, be called a way of peace

and pleasantness, a path comparatively level and unobstructed ; but to you it must ever be an ascent, toilsome and full of hindrances, though all, I grant, arising from your own character. To some, the Christian warfare may afford but an occasional contest ; to you it will be severe, continual, uninterrupted. Unless the loins of your mind are ever girded, your lamp ever trimmed, your eye ever vigilant, again and again will the enemy break through, to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. That adversary who is styled the roaring lion, who goeth about seeking whom he may devour—must be to you an ever present fear ; a being, whom it is dangerous to forget, and destruction to meet unarmed. Christians do not sufficiently recognize what may be termed the permitted omnipresence of Satan. He is with us—O where and in what form is he not ? In our occupations he is with us, as a spirit of pride and presumption ; in our enjoyments, of rashness, levity, and vain glory ; in our affections, as a spirit of idolatry ; in duty, of alternate indolence and self-righteousness :—on our right hand and on our left, in company and in solitude, encompassing our

path, and about our bed ; in our thoughts, our feelings, our memories, our dreams, our words, our very silence, he is with us—with strength, subtlety, devices and assaults—never weary, never at a loss ! Watch, therefore—watch and pray that another and a mightier may watch over you also. Dream not of final conquest till you lay down your life and weapons in the grave ; nor of final peace, till you enter that land where the inhabitants learn war no more.

My friend, let us meditate for a few moments on death and judgment ; they are sometimes the only views that have a quenching influence upon unholy tumult of heart. Let us suppose the restraints removed that now shackle you ; all the dazzling dreams your wild heart pictures, fulfilled ; all that you now long for without daring to acquire, given to your grasp, and given in connection with a power of enjoyment, undisturbed by self-reproach or anxious forebodings ; suppose that you have the banquet of life without the sword of conscience—what then ? Insensibility to danger does not include freedom from danger : if the blind man may

wander to the brink of a precipice without fear, can he fall from it without destruction? We walk upon the verge of two worlds; closely are we encompassed with spiritual agencies, ever plotting our ruin or discomfort; at our feet, perchance, lies the very grave that awaits us; and the veil which divides time from eternity, can we say when for us it shall be rent? can we say when it shall not? Surely this uncertainty of duration were in itself enough to chasten enjoyment, however safe: what effect, then, will it have upon enjoyment snatched with hasty fear from the midst of a thousand sins and dangers—snatched in defiance of God's frown? But *can* the mind that has once exulted in the contemplation of so glorious a being as God, ever really be entranced with worldly delights? Can gold, or adulation, or pageantry, or knowledge of it have no reference to man as immortal, or affection if this world is its horizon—ever bribe a renewed soul into happiness? Can all, in concentrated perfection, suffice for a soul that has once "made towards God as its principle and fountain, exerting itself in holy and affectionate thoughts

of him, sometimes on one of his attributes, sometimes on another, as the bee amongst flowers?"* It cannot—cannot be. You may not find sweetness in religion, but every thing else you will find positively embittered; it is so even now, it will increase at every succeeding step of declension. There is a littleness, an insufficiency in the noblest objects, if viewed merely in reference to time; while there is honor in the meanest duty, elevation in the humblest character, importance in the commonest action, which principle connects with God. Deny it as we please, all things glow with beauty, dignity, and worth, in precise proportion as they relate to him, his will, and his glory.

O my friend! return to this Fountain of unfailing, unimaginable fullness! Go back to this Rest so sweet, so stable! Break the enslaving bonds that detain you from it; they are withes to him who determines to escape, fetters only to the willing captive. Look again to that Cross "so mournfully, mysteriously divine." Flee once more to the city

* Leighton.

of refuge ; its gates are not yet closed ; the
avenger of blood yet lingers ; there is yet
room—there is yet time ; return, return,
return !

LETTER XIX.

MY DEAR —,

I HAVE addressed you before on subjects connected with your welfare ; I am about to address you again in a more decided manner. I desire to bring the controversy between your soul and God more palpably to an issue ; to show you the fearful consequences of thus “halting between two opinions ;” to put the alternative of walking with God, and walking after your own imaginations, in its real and terrific magnitude. I do so with mingled and mournful feelings ; under a sense of inadequacy to the effort, of despondency as to the result, of sorrow that you should so willingly hazard and lightly value that, which Omnipotence alone could estimate the worth of, and there-

fore could alone redeem! You tell me you are unhappy; how should you be otherwise? Your conscience convinces you of sin in neglecting this great salvation; your reason tells you that "it is no vain thing, that it is your life;" and sometimes your heart inclines you to say, "I will arise, and go to my Father—I will surrender this hidden world of hopes and desires, affections and fancies, restless as a troubled sea, unstable as the flitting clouds, cold and earthly as the grave, to the influence of that Spirit which will purify, and strengthen, and console; which will supply what I need—a sufficient motive; and give what I seek—happiness." Thus, when under some transient impression of the goodness of God, you feel and determine; but the exciting cause is no sooner withdrawn, the sermon, the address, or the book no sooner closed, than the veil returns to your heart, the blindness to your eyes, and the old rebelling principle again enthrones itself in your will and affections. Your language, if really avowed, is then, "God, who forms the glory and the bliss of heaven—God, only wise, only perfect, the giver of all good

gifts, the rewarder of all that diligently seek him, the Father of mercies, the God of consolations, the perfection of beauty—God, in all his majesty and goodness, in his faithful promises, his royal power, his gracious condescension, is not enough for *me*! My heart is too large for even his fullness to satisfy; my mind, he is not worthy to occupy; it has other objects to contemplate, another inheritance to delight in. I am young, and the WORLD is before me; its enchanting pleasures, its gay varieties, its honors which can stimulate, its praise which can repay, its friendships, bright, and wild, and warm; its intellect, exercised without the gloomy restraints of religion, spreading its treasures at my feet. O world, *thou* shalt be my choice, for thou canst fill and satisfy my immortal, my infinite soul!" Thus alternately do you reason, and thus alternately resolve. O that a ray of heavenly wisdom might dart into your mind, and convince you of your folly and your guilt! that you might know, even now, in these your early days, the things that belong to your everlasting peace, before disappointment, and afflictions,

and weariness, and remorse, teach you what that world is, when sought as the supreme good, desired as the satisfying portion. Is the assurance of him who is the Truth, nothing? "Behold, all ye that kindle a fire, that compass yourselves about with sparks; walk in the light of your fire, and in the sparks that ye have kindled. This shall ye have of mine hand, ye shall lie down in sorrow. Stand now with thine enchantments, and with the multitude of thy sorceries wherein thou hast labored from thy youth; if so be thou shalt be able to profit, if so be thou mayest prevail. Behold they shall be as stubble, the fire shall burn them, they shall not deliver themselves from the power of the flame. Thus shall they be unto thee with whom thou hast labored: they shall wander every one in his quarter, none shall save thee: they are vanity and the work of errors, in the time of their visitation they shall perish. The portion of Jacob is not like them, for he is the Former of all things; the Lord of Hosts is his name. He is the true God, he is the living God, and an everlasting king; at his wrath the earth shall tremble, and the nations shall not be able to abide his indignation."

Will you have this Being, fearful in praises, glorious in holiness, whose hand none can stay, whose counsels none avert, for your friend or your enemy? Will you know him as a consuming fire, or as love unspeakable? as your reconciled Father, or your inexorable Judge? Will you say, "Depart from me, for I desire not the knowledge of thy ways;" or, "Draw me, and I will run after thee?" Shelter yourself no longer in vague and general intentions; delay not your decision another hour. "If Baal be God"—if one, if any of the objects you now desire and seek after, be all-sufficient for life and death, for time and for eternity, "follow him"—follow them. Alas! you know in your convinced judgment, that none would avail; that vanity is, by God's immutable decree, stamped upon every thing that exists out of his presence, and is unconnected with his favor. Delight, as one says, may be found in the creature, but peace and rest never. "So far and no further," is said to us concerning whatsoever we pursue on earth; it is said to our minds when we seek knowledge; to our hearts when we seek happiness;

to our souls, even when they desire the spiritual blessings which God has commanded them to desire, but which, in this life, they shall never wholly possess. Are you determined to learn by no one's experience but your own? In addition to the testimony of God, is the testimony of the myriads who have gone down to the dust "seeking rest and finding none," of no avail? Are you alone to eat forbidden fruit and not die? Are you, of all earth's generations, to follow supremely, idolatrously, and determinately, those things against which Jehovah has denounced a wo, and yet be absolved from the consequences? Why are you privileged to expect to find happiness bound up with forgetfulness of duty, enmity and distaste towards heavenly contemplations, holy habits, and spiritual desires? Why is God, who declares that his glory he will not give to another, and that seeking the honor that cometh from man is essential idolatry, to allow you, wilfully and avowedly, to seek your own aggrandizement, and withal add his favor and bless you in your sin? At least, if you are determined to take up with

a heaven of earthly delights, do not presume to look towards that rest which remaineth for the Christian pilgrim.

"To be in both worlds full
Is more than God was!"

Your choice you must make, and by it you must abide. Alas! this wavering of heart, this rebellion of will, this tossing to and fro, proves that choice to be at present fixed. Fear and occasional good impressions may draw you towards him who would be your rest; but your bent of mind, your wishes, point another way—even to the gaudy bowers of earthly enjoyment, and the giddy multitudes that throng "the broad road." Will you not pause, before you join that multitude who, however distinguished by variety of pursuit, are in spirit essentially one; inasmuch as the things they seek, whether grave or frivolous, inherently valuable, or intrinsically baubles, are equally destructive, as occupying the place of God? Or will you live on in this wretched uncertainty, this inward strife, which embitters a season that might be one of sweet, and even bright serenity? Day after day will

you continue to see the right, and yet pursue the wrong? to stifle your convictions? to call good evil, and evil good, and put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter? My heart mourns over you with true and tender pity; for I know by experience all that you must endure, unless divine grace shorten these days of your wandering in the wilderness, and incite you to go up at once and possess "that good land," that fair inheritance, which God chooses for his people: unless you are drawn with full, influential, and appropriating purpose of heart to say, "The Lord he is the God; the Lord he is the God." Many are happy, (as they estimate happiness,) without a sense of God's favor, without caring or even knowing what is the true end of their existence; but you cannot be so, for two reasons. You have been too well instructed, and too often impressed, for your conscience to be lulled by the opiates which avail for ignorance. Your heart may rebel against God, but your judgment will rebel against your heart, and with not enough religion to make you happy and ensure your safety, you will have just enough to render you miserable

and increase your condemnation. Others may immerse themselves in wild vanities, and feel no compunction ; you may make the attempt, but only to experience a thorny conscience. To you, the pleasures of the world will grow beside the precipice of remorse, and whatever be the phantom of your pursuit, you will

“ Look behind,
And hear a voice in every wind,
And snatch a fearful joy.”

Others may be satisfied without God, because they take false views of his attributes, and do not realize eternity ; but your understanding is enlightened by sound doctrine, your memory is stored with scripture statements, and even should devotional habits be cast off, remembrance will haunt you like an accusing spirit. The sight of Christians will sadden and reproach you, because you will feel that they possess a treasure which you have not, and which you will strive in vain to despise. Your Bible will be “ a flaming sword, turning every way ” to keep you from happiness ; your eyes will be open to discern its threatenings, while you will not dare to

reach forth your hand and take of its promises :—ordinances will be “a savor of death unto death,” alternately increasing your stubbornness, or rousing the stings of conscience ; and your Sabbaths will be emphatically wretched, days of weariness, or days of remorse. In affliction, in danger, even in common cares, your soul will be desolate ; as your heart is against God, so will you feel his heart against you ; and every effort to ask his protection or his counsel, will be checked by the remembrance of a verse like this, “Where are thy gods that thou hast made thee ? let them arise, if they can save thee in the time of thy trouble.” Thus will you “wander from mountain to hill, ashamed of the oaks which you have desired, and confounded for the gardens you have chosen.” There is yet another reason why, in the event of your remaining alienated from God, you may expect unhappiness ; a reason grounded on your natural character. Ardent, ambitious, impatient of control, consumed even now by romantic fancies, tell me, how can you be happy without that principle which, by regulating your mind, would reconcile

you to life as it is really constituted ; not the life you now picture, nor that depicted in a novel, but the life of common occupations, relieved only by common pleasures ? I admit, you have a resource in your excellent abilities and taste for mental cultivation ; but so long as your present feelings continue, and you consider them merely available to ambitious purposes, you will derive more disappointment than comfort from the possession of them. Knowledge, loved and sought for its own sake, enhances happiness : knowledge, merely sought and loved for purposes of display and self-aggrandizement, induces much evil and many mortifications.

Dearest —, let me break off this melancholy sketch, and picture the bright reverse. I do not say that religion would keep you in that constant excitement in which you now deem happiness to consist ; but once received into your soul as a controlling and subduing power, new desires and new affections would arise, and induce a taste for a new style of happiness, even the happiness of peace. Only ask him, and God will enable you to see honor in utility, and pleasure in duty.

Once his child and follower, the promise that "no good thing will be withheld," is yours ; and He whose eyes are over all his works, pledges himself to afford you all that shall minister to your real welfare and solid comfort. I know that you are disinclined even to ask God to subdue your disinclination ! I fear that you cherish a dislike to that surrender which is in fact your wisdom and your glory, as eventually it would prove your joy. But beware how you trifle with Him who hath all power and might ; "who shutteth and no man openeth ;" who saith, "My Spirit shall not always strive with man." Beware how you yield to counteracting influences—how you erect barriers with your own hands. Pray, though it be with a backward heart and a stammering tongue : pray, in the words, but in a sense different from that of Moses, "I beseech thee show me thy glory : obscure by the manifestation of thy greatness, and thy all sufficiency, the earthly delights and splendid vanities which now allure my eyes and draw my affections from thee. I beseech thee show me *thy* glory."

Amongst the myriads of glorified spirits

who now walk in white, and behold the face of God in heaven, there are those whose hearts once rebelled against his ways far more than yours, and those who were made willing to sacrifice more than ever you will possess ; those who were enabled " to choose affliction with the people of God," to " count all things they once termed gain, but as loss for Christ ;" " to take joyfully the spoiling of their goods." Read the eleventh of Hebrews, and ask God to make you ashamed of your disinclination to forsake all and follow him, when all you have to forsake is, in comparison, less than an atom to the universe ; when you have to receive back an " all in all," precious, eternal, unfading, glorious !

May God the Saviour bless you, my dear girl, and sooner or later fetch you home to his flock, and give you to see that he is worthy to be praised ; make you feel it your joy and privilege to wear his yoke, and follow his footsteps, and call him Master.

Ever your faithful friend.

LETTER XX.

MY DEAR —,

I WAS thinking this morning how comparatively easy is the Christian life, as you and your companions are situated—with your privileges so happily combined with your pleasures. The manna of religious instruction falls sweetly round you in the dew of affection and solicitude; and you are all sheltered, like lambs in a fold, from the “blast of the terrible one,” from the rough places of the wilderness, and the snares of the world. You hear of these things, but your eyes see them not. And yet I thought again, they must, one and all, pass through these ordeals; one and all must, after a while, stand unaided and alone. The scaffolding must be taken down, and O if the building should not be

found established on the rock ! If, when no longer sheltered from temptation, and watched over every moment, some promising plant should droop, and prove that it had not been of the "Lord's planting," that it had no "depth of earth !" I carried the picture much further in my own mind, and thinking of *you* in particular, my heart breathed a prayer that you might not so fall away, but might receive grace to stand.

But, dear —, make it matter of serious inquiry, whether your interest in religion arises from, and is dependent upon, external excitements, or whether it springs from the inward operations of divine grace ; whether, when withdrawn from the spiritual atmosphere which now envelopes your life, you carry the "kingdom of God *within* you." I would hope it is so, or, if you cannot now feel that it is, that you will not rest until doubt becomes certainty ; till you can, with humble confidence, avouch the Lord to be your God. It is one of the wonders of the Scriptures, that they contain precepts and illustrations, suited to all characters and all ages ; and it is also one of the wonders of

grace, that it influences every heart according to its natural temperament, and thus renders man a "worker together with God." The influence of grace is a tempering and regulating influence; it comes to supply the deficiencies and cut down the redundances of character; it is to some a two-edged sword, and to others it is the "soft rain" and fertilizing dew. Whenever, then, you are depressed by a sense of your peculiar infirmities, whatever they may be, go straight to your treasure house, the Bible, and see whether there is not some promise or precept especially adapted for the occasion. It may require time and study to become a skilful seeker and a ready finder; but with God's blessing, you will find time and study well bestowed. We do sadly restrict the sense and use of Scripture; we shall find comparatively few passages which meditative prayer may not convert to personal benefit. Make the Bible your manual of devotion. Pray over it, and pray in its words; it is your spiritual meat, your directory, your armor on the right hand and on the left, your lamp, your balm when wounded, your

restorative when weary, your standard against the enemy, your "tree of the knowledge of good and evil," and your tree of life also, the leaf whereof shall never wither, neither shall the fruit fall.

I have not written to you as I wished, but I am not now equal to writing more. Assure yourself of my sincere regard : and with an earnest desire that God may lead, and keep, and instruct you ; that he may enable you to be a faithful witness of his grace here, and a partaker of his glory in heaven, believe me, dear ——,

Faithfully yours.

LETTER XXI.

MY DEAR —,

I AM glad that you spend your birthday with us, that I may have this opportunity of assuring you that I earnestly desire for you the continuance and increase of "every good and perfect gift," the best blessings of this life, and the fullness of that which is to come. Perhaps, a year ago, I had coveted for my friends gifts far different from those I covet for them now ; for life now wears another aspect, and there is a sense in which I regard my friends with another love. Life is still a race, but I perceive that neither the goal nor the crown belong to this world ; and that in this world it is therefore in vain to seek them. My love for my friends still leads me to wish their temporal honor, com-

fort, and happiness ; but only in that way, and in that degree, which will not interfere with their running “the race set before them.” I do, however, wish you many a sunny day, many a pleasant bower, and many a peaceful rest, to beguile your pilgrimage through this world of thorns and briers. The Israelites had their Elim, a place of palm-trees and of wells, to comfort them after their Marah, the fountain of bitter water. May the same kind and gracious Providence watch over you, appoint your lot, temper your sorrows, enhance your comforts, be to you as rivers in a dry place, the shadow of a rock in a weary land : and may he so guide, so teach, so chasten, and so support you through life, that after death he may receive you into a “mansion not made with hands, eternal in the heavens ;” give you the crown which cannot fade, and the garment which never grows old, his presence which is life, and his favor which is fullness of joy for evermore. Your present birthday occurs on a Sabbath ; but it is an earthly, and therefore an alloyed Sabbath. That of heaven will be one, ever bright and never-

ending : thither may we both aspire ! “ God,” says St. Augustine, “ is patient because eternal ;” and who can look back upon his past life, be that life long or short, and not blushing-ly acknowledge the truth of the assertion ; and not tremble also at another observation of an old divine, that “ God is indeed patient, but of every day and hour of such patience he keeps an exact account.”

My dear friend, writing as I do under solemn impressions of those realities, those only realities—God, Death, the Soul, and Judgment, I cannot—dare not but be faithful ! The measure of religion that satisfies in health, will not support in sickness, still less upon a death-bed. When the soul feels itself naked in the presence of God—apprehended as God the Judge of all, sitting on his throne, King of kings, Lord of lords, doing as he will among the armies of heaven, attended by ten thousand times ten thousand ministering spirits—God, fearful in justice, glorious in holiness, in whose eyes the very heavens are not clean, O what can vague, dim views and hopes avail ? Insufficient, even to a sense of anguish, then, are remembrances of moral effort, good desires, and devotional

exercises; they cannot satisfy, they cannot calm the awakened mind. But if the sufferer turns to those oracles that cannot lie, and reads therein, "If any man sin we have an advocate with the Father, even Jesus Christ the righteous," then may he say, "though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil." It is astonishing too, how little we care even for intellectual things in seasons of sorrow and sickness; to use the scriptural phrase, "they wither as the green herb," whilst divine truths, on the contrary, are like the trees in the prophet's vision; "their leaves do not fade, neither is the fruit thereof consumed;" they are a healing balsam for the wounded heart, a restoring medicine for the sinking spirit. The brightest flashes of wit, the loftiest flights of imagination, the subtlest exercises of the understanding, are to the sick man but as idle tales; whilst the simplest promise revealed in that best book for the day of health, that only book for the hour of adversity, is then seen to be most precious, and felt to be most prized. If I ever meet with a skeptic, this shall be my grand argument for the divinity of the Bible!

LETTER XXII.

I AM not satisfied with myself, my dear —, that I have never brought the subject of religion before you as I ought to have done, as I have wished to do, but felt sinfully ashamed of doing.

Dear —, do you ever remember the instruction of your youth? Do you realizingly remember it? Is the Bible to you a pleasant book, or is it merely read as a duty? Is prayer the natural and spontaneous language of your heart, a heart "hungering and thirsting after righteousness?" Is God present with you? that is, does the thought of his all-seeing eye, that what you are doing he views, that what you are thinking he knows, prompt to action, restrain from folly, quicken holy and heavenly affections? Where are your heart's first and strongest feelings given?

Where your mind's most frequent, fervent thoughts? to God, or to the world? to the never-fading treasures of a never-ending eternity, or to the passing cares and pageantries of life? My dear —, I only *ask* these questions; I make no charge; I give no opinion; but I do entreat you to set yourself steadily to the work of self-examination on this subject. Ask God to be, by his Spirit and his word, a lamp to your feet and a light to your path: ask him to open the eyes of your understanding, that you may discern the state of your own heart, your hopes of salvation, the vanity of the world, the glory and excellency of Christ. Do not tell me that you are too busy, too much engrossed by worldly occupations, and care, and company; these are necessary in their place, but is there no place for God? The apostle says, "not slothful in business," but he also says, "fervent in spirit, serving the Lord;" by which he means that a Christian may, by motive, principle, and affection, unite both, and at the same time.

Dear —, unless God is recognized as a "reconciled Father in Christ," death is in-

deed a king of terrors, a giant waiting for his prey, a tyrant claiming his captive, only to transfer him to one more terrific still—even to Satan, and the region where “hope never comes!” O why do mortals suffer their cruel enemy to beguile them from him who would be their tender friend? Why do they listen to his flatteries, or fear his threats, or believe his promises, and say, “peace, peace,” when there is no peace? or shelter themselves in good resolutions, and glide through life, saying to themselves, “to-morrow,” till to-morrow rises not for them?

Pardon my earnestness; there is peace, there is joy, there is fullness of satisfaction in seeking and serving God, and there is none in seeking and serving aught else in the universe. Thousands have rejoiced in the discovery of this truth in this world; and tens of thousands have mourned over it in eternity! Which will *you* do?

LETTER XXIII.

MY DEAR BOYS,

I HAVE often talked to you about God, but now I wish to talk to you by letter, that when I am far away you may have my words, though you cannot hear my voice. As well as I can, I wish to explain what it is your duty to believe, desire, and practise, concerning true religion.

The soul, my dear children, that hidden, but precious part of man, whereby he lives, and moves, and thinks, and feels, is not what it was when God pronounced Adam "very good." Then, pure thoughts, right feelings, and holy actions, proceeded from it as flowers grow from a plant, or fruit from a tree. But you know the history of Adam's fall; and even if you did not, I

think your own hearts would convince you that something is wrong ; that by natural inclination they do not bring forth the fruits of the Spirit—"love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance." If God had given man a wicked soul in the first instance, we need no longer wonder at man's wicked life ; but it came from his hands pure and perfect : "God made man upright—he hath sought out many inventions." All the ancient history you read, proves the latter part of this sentence ; you find no nation, people, kindred, or tongue, except the Jews, that did not, during four thousand years, worship and serve the creature instead of the Creator ; making to themselves idols of every kind, and walking in the imagination of their own evil hearts. The Bible gives us a sad history even of the chosen people of God ; neither judgment nor mercy could long restrain them from worshipping false gods, and forsaking the true One. All this proves, that though man had power to get wrong, he was, of himself, absolutely unable to get right again ; just as a blind person must have his sight

restored before he can discern the path wherein he should walk. To this end, God, who was not willing that the world he had made so fair and good should be wholly destroyed by sin, or that his creatures should for ever be subject to Satan, his enemy and theirs, in due time sent his only Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, that "whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life." To believe in Christ, is not merely to credit his words, but to trust his power, desire his favor, obey his wishes; and surely the "Lamb of God who taketh away the sins of the world," He, "who being in the likeness of God, took upon him the form of a servant," who laid down his life, not for his friends, but his enemies, is fully worthy of such love and reverence. Perhaps you think it must be pleasant and easy to feel thus towards the Saviour; pleasant it certainly is, but not so easy as you may imagine. You remember the verse we read last night, "He came unto his own, and his own received him not:" and again, that other verse spoken by John the Baptist, "I indeed baptize you with water, but there

standeth one among you whom ye know not; he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire;”—this last verse explains whatever may seem strange in the first. The Jews were “his own,” to whom, after having been promised and expected for some thousand years, “he came.” They witnessed his miracles, they heard his words, they saw his holy and benevolent life, yet the most part of the nation “received him not,” but despised, rejected, and crucified him! Why was this? They had not been baptized with the Holy Ghost; in other words, their minds and hearts were in the condition of blind and deaf persons, who having eyes and ears, neither hear nor see. Now do not think to say within yourselves, “O we are not like those wicked Jews, we believe in God the Father Almighty, and in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord. It was indeed good of him to die for us, and we love him for it, and we hope, that after death, he will take us to heaven, that beautiful place, where there is no pain nor sorrow.” O my dear children! how do you prove your belief and love, and what reason have

you to hope that he will bestow upon you heavenly joy and glory? Is it willingly or unwillingly that you read the Scriptures, go to church, listen to instruction, and spend the Sabbath in a quiet, orderly, religious manner? If your consciences answer "not willingly," there needs no further witness against you: the case is bad. Even if you reply "willingly," I must question you a little further, for it is possible to like the Bible for its interesting stories; to listen to instruction, and like going to church, and being quiet on a Sunday, to please your friends; or because you suppose God will reward you for so doing. The proof that a person really loves the Saviour and believes on him, is this:—he thinks much about him; he feels the sin that is in his heart, he laments it, and not only so, he strives against it. He also endeavors to act as if the eye of God were ever upon him, like the sun looking down from the heavens. The word of God is his delight, because it teaches him the will of God; and he prays, not from fear, or from compulsion, but from the same motive that leads an affectionate child to converse with a wise

parent—that he may thereby acquire wisdom, strength, and comfort. There are many verses in the Bible which explain true religion in so short and simple a manner, that though the greatest men can do no more than experience them, even a little child can comprehend them. Here is one, by which, as some liquids discover whether gold be pure or impure, a person may discover whether or no he is a Christian. “We are they,” says St. Paul, “who worship God in the spirit,” that is, who remember his presence in the way I have just described; “and rejoice in Christ Jesus,” that is, who own him among men as a king, whose laws they delight to honor, and who trust him as a Saviour all gracious and all glorious; and lastly, “have no confidence in the flesh,” that is, are convinced that “there is none good but one, that is God,” and, therefore, do not seek to exalt themselves, either in his sight, or in the eyes of their fellow-creatures. Of those who are now in heaven, multitudes were only children on earth, but even then they were children, who, according to their age and opportunity, thus “worshipped God

in the spirit, rejoiced in Jesus Christ, and had no confidence in the flesh." There is but one way of salvation, one law of faith, one rule of conduct, alike for young and old, for rich and poor, for wise and simple. The same degree of attainment may not be expected from all, but from all will be expected the same sincerity of desire and earnestness of effort. Josiah did not, at eight years old, remove idolatry from Jerusalem, but he "*began* to seek after the God of David his father;" and the slothful servant in the parable was condemned, not for having failed to gain ten talents, but for having made no use whatever of his one. God requires from us only "according to what we have, and not according to what we have not," and this renders him so kind and gracious a master. Ignorant human beings may overwork each other, and over-expect from each other, not from cruelty, but from not knowing what another is exactly able to do, or bear, or give. But God, who sees the heart and knows our frame, never forgets "that we are dust." He pities our infirmities as a father; the Saviour feels for our sorrows as

a friend; and the Holy Spirit is ready to strengthen our weakness, instruct our ignorance; by his grace enable us to overcome the sins of our nature, and at last obtain the joys of heaven. You often repeat to me the verse which says, "Ask and it shall be given you, seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you;" and you know the meaning of the words, but I fear you do not yet feel the meaning of the idea. If your lessons are difficult, you ask your master to explain them; if you are in pain or in trouble, you apply to your father or to me: conscious that your youth renders you helpless, you solicit assistance from those who are stronger and wiser. O that you would act thus towards God! that when evil tempers and foolish desires come into your hearts, as come they will, you would beg of God for help against them, and for holy tempers and good desires to put in their place.

My dearest boys, think of the two eternities! that of heaven, which God offers; and that which belongs to Satan and all whom he has ensnared. Both are never-ending; but O the difference between them! No

human eye could bear to see the gulf which divides the one from the other, that great gulf which once passed, can never again be re-passed.

Death is a terrible thought, and the grave a desolate place, to all who live without God in the world ; but death is only a messenger of peace, and the grave but a bed of hope, to those who, having loved Christ on earth, go to live with him in heaven. But let me warn you of one mistake peculiarly common to children. Do not cheat yourselves with vain fancies, that when you are older you shall be better ; that when you are men you shall find it easier to think of these things : that it is time enough yet—that *yet* has ruined the souls of thousands ! **TO-MORROW** is the sluggard's motto, it is taught him by Satan. **TO-DAY** is the Christian's watch-word, it is taught him by God ; even God, who is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance here, and to glory hereafter.

You have stood by the sea-side and seen the waves one after another roll forward, and one after another dash upon the shore ;

others followed in their stead, none of them were the same waves, each was a different one : —such are the days of man's life, only with this difference—they are soon ended, while the waves still continue to roll on. The billows leave no mark behind them, but each of our days leaves a record, good or bad, wise or foolish. No one counts the waves, no one cares how they speed ; but of our days God takes account, and keeps a remembrance, both how many they are, and how they are spent. You have stood too in a garden in spring, and seen the green leaves budding on the trees ; and soon after, the bright blossoms open amongst them ; and again, in autumn, you have seen the fruit hanging thickly upon the boughs, ripe for gathering :—such should be the soul of man in youth and age. It is now your spring time ; you are full of hopes, and joys, and fancies—and it is well ; but where are the blossoms amongst these the green leaves of your soul ? Are you acquiring that knowledge, are you gaining those habits and dispositions, which shall ripen hereafter into a useful and honorable life ? The blossom, if good for any thing, must turn

to fruit ;—boys must become men, not merely men in stature, but men in thought and action, men as valuable members of society. You are of no use now, but for what you may hereafter be. I do not say, that unless religion becomes the governing principle of your lives you will be useless in the world ; for, unhappily, we have had many brave soldiers, prudent and successful merchants, excellent poets, painters, and philosophers, who yet have not had the fear of God in their hearts. But I do say that you will be *more* useful with it ; that without it you cannot be safe, nor even in this world happy for a continuance. Then, when the great day of account comes, when all, from the king to the beggar, from Adam, who lived eight hundred years, to the infant who died as soon as it was born, must stand before the judgment-seat of God ; then will religion be seen in its true worth. Then will it be manifest, that it does indeed profit nothing to gain the world and lose the soul. Then, as in winter you have seen the tree naked, without leaves or fruit, every bough, even every little twig exposed to view ;—

so, in that terrible day, will your souls appear in the searching sight of God; every action, every motive, every thought made manifest, nothing concealed. There will then be no hiding-place, no offers of mercy, no space for repentance; the Saviour will save no longer; the Holy Spirit help no longer; for time will be no more, and this fair world will be itself destroyed. There will then remain but two places of existence—heaven and hell; but two divisions, in which the whole human race will be included—the saved and the lost. O let me solemnly entreat you to think of these things before it be too late. At present Christ says, “Suffer little children to come unto me:” you are children, go to him. As yet God says, “A new heart will I give you, and a right spirit will I put within you:” you want that new heart and right spirit, ask him to bestow them. The ancient heathens pretended to know of a stream called Lethe, a draught of which enabled a person to forget the past; and some Indian tribes yet believe that there is somewhere a fountain which can renew the youth of those who drink of it. These

are fables. But the Spirit of Truth tells of a river proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb, of which, whosoever drinks, shall thirst no more, but shall have in his heart "a well of water springing up unto everlasting life." And not only is this revealed, but offered for our acceptance. The Spirit proclaims through the gospel, "Ho, every one that thirsteth come, and whosoever will, let him come." Dear children, before your feet have wandered in the crooked paths of the world; before your hearts are hardened by its pleasures, your good desires choked by its cares, say now, even now, "Lord, give us this water, that we thirst not, neither go elsewhere to draw."

Most affectionately yours.

LETTER XXIV.

MY DEAR —,

If I did not, both by habit and constitution, belong to that class of characters who “look before and after, and pine for what is not,” I might hesitate as to the degree in which I ought to encourage you to take a less sombre view of man’s condition in this world. As it is, I feel no hesitation in writing cheerfully; and I should be very happy if I could transfuse cheerfulness into your mind. From what passed when last I saw you, from your present letter, and from what I know of your cast of mind, I gather this to be your dilemma—that it seems impossible to be very happy on earth, and retain a strong and abiding desire of heaven; that the world is so full of sins

and snares, that without being habitually wretched, it appears impossible to be spiritually minded; that for yourself, you look on life with more of dread than desire, and think the day of man's death better than the day of his birth. Now this state of feeling originates in a partial apprehension of one truth, and in total forgetfulness of another. The whole course of the world is, you say, so fearfully opposed to the law of God, so overrun with crime and the consequences of crime, that it is impossible to contemplate it without pain, and shame, and dismay. To this statement every one must assent with a sigh; and if grief for the prevalence of iniquity induce more active endeavors to counteract its influence in our own sphere and generation, the feeling, though mournful, will be salutary. Inasmuch as this result obtains, I would rejoice, not sympathize with you. If the contemplation of the good that is done, stimulates your benevolence less than the contemplation of the evil that remains to be lamented, why contemplate the evil most? it will subtract from your happiness; but if it really makes

you more useful, more self-denying, more "meet for the inheritance of the saints in light," the gain will exceed the loss. But I do not think that such will be the effect. No morbid feeling of any kind can produce vigorous exertion. Fiction may represent the union of benevolence and diseased sensibility, but real life never witnessed it. The persons who in deed and in truth do benefit the world by their labor, who here remove a weed, and there plant a flower, are, and must be, *cheerful*; must, and will take happy views of life and its contingencies. As Christians they see, and mourn, and admit its evils; but then every moment spent in mere feeling, every sigh and every tear that does not issue in exertion, they regard as wasted. They know that the world is a wilderness, and that nothing but the hand of God himself will ever change it into a fruitful field; but they know too, that in measure and in degree he will bless human efforts for its improvement; therefore, they go on and take courage. This "patient continuance in well doing" has, independent of the "glory, honor, and immortality," attached to it by

the apostle, a present and consentaneous reward. I do not speak of success, that may frequently be delayed, but of the hidden, healthy happiness which they habitually experience, and which, if in one view the effect of their active benevolence, is in another its cause. I am sure, if you will think over all the Christians you know, or have read of, you will be constrained to say, the happiest and the most heavenly-minded are the most active; nay, I will go further, and say, that their thoughts of heaven, if less speculative, and perhaps less vivid, are also less selfish. They realize it as a place of repose; but if God may be honored, and man benefited, they are willing to bear the heat and burden of a long life before they "rest from their labors." They think of something more than how to get to heaven as fast, and with as little trouble as possible. They would not bury their talent any more than they would waste it. The hope of heaven, and the prospect of heavenly joys, do not render them discontented with their preparatory state of existence; do not disqualify them for life; do not diminish but increase

life's enjoyments. The expectation of being one day angels, does not make them angry that they must first be men.

Ask yourselves, then, whether your present deep disgust at the trivialties which require, you say, the mass of time and thought, rendering the soul the drudge of the body, and time paramount to eternity; ask yourself whether your deep disgust at this state of things does not evidence a little pride, and a little romance. You wish mankind to be wholly and indiscriminately creatures of pure intellect, and pure sensibility; you want life to be a golden age revived, and the world an untroubled, unoccupied Eden; you would have spiritual contemplation form the sole business of existence, and refined and imaginative intercourse its chief pleasure: you want heaven now. But, my dearest —, this is aiming to be wiser, kinder, and purer than God; and if it arise, as I said before, from a partial apprehension of one truth—man's sinfulness; it arises also from total forgetfulness of another—that man on earth is merely in a state of discipline. He is a child at school; an heir that “is under

tutor and governors until the time appointed of the father." He is like seed, sown here in corruption, that by that very process he may hereafter be "raised in incorruption;" he is sown in dishonor, that he may be raised in glory; sown in weakness, that he may be raised in power. And who has encompassed him with infirmities, and obliged him to eat his bread in the sweat of his brow? Who has said, "Six days shalt thou labor," as imperatively as, "the seventh day thou shalt do no manner of work?"—Even that omniscient Being, that King eternal, immortal, invisible, that only wise God, who, when man had made himself a sinner, and therefore unfit for an existence purely spiritual, knew best how to bring good out of evil; how, from the fragments of a shattered fabric, to erect one more lasting; to create a new world out of the wreck and chaos of an old one! Punishment there undoubtedly is, in the dispensation which makes labor and sorrow the heritage of man, wheresoever, and howsoever found. Grief we must inevitably feel, to think of what this world was made to be, what yet it contains materials for being, and what, alas!

it is. But joy, and praise, and thanksgiving ought to predominate in every heart, and will do so, wherever the relative situations and respective characters of God and man are properly understood. What, has the creature marred a work which its infinite Creator pronounced "very good;" and has that Creator restored somewhat of its beauty, suffered it to retain any of its blessings, and promised finally to remove altogether the curse that hangs over it; and is the creature justified in rebellious murmurings and vain imaginations? "Why doth a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins?" Banish, my dear ——, all utopian dreams, and henceforth, when you contemplate the course of life, wonder at the wisdom, and adore the goodness, which suffers its harassing cares, its mean occupations, its degrading necessities, its low and little state of being, to be compatible with the means of grace and the hope of glory. If it grieve you, that "what shall we eat, and what shall we drink, and wherewithal shall we be clothed," engages, of necessity, the greater part of the time of the greater part of the world, be thankful that

such necessity is not laid upon you, and strive to lighten their burden on whom it is laid. If, on the other hand, you are irritated by those who, from choice, and from inability to appreciate better things, needlessly involve themselves in petty cares and petty pleasures, do not forget the duty of Christian charity, and still be thankful, that both mentally and morally, God has shown you "a more excellent way." But the strongest proof that the present constitution of life is peculiarly adapted for the growth of the Christian character, is to be found in the pages of inspiration. The records of the Jewish, and of the early Christian church, abound with miracles, with strange interpositions of Providence, with stupendous revelations of Deity; yet, however highly we see man honored, however endowed with superhuman powers, however closely connected with God himself, the habitual tenor of his existence remains unaltered. He is not disrobed of the flesh, nor of the wants and weaknesses to which flesh is heir; in his habits and character, he continues man. If in one place we find Abraham pleading

with God for the guilty cities, as a man pleadeth with his friend, we find him elsewhere fetching a kid from the flock, and hasting to dress it for his guests; we find him leading out his servants to war, or arranging his household in peace. Daniel, the "man greatly beloved," and highly honored of God, yet despatches "the king's business:" and to descend lower in the style of worldly occupation, St. Paul, after having been caught up into the third heaven, returns to earth, not only to work signs and wonders, not only to hazard his life for the gospel of Christ, but to minister with his own hands to his necessities. Yes, with those very hands which when laid upon the Ephesian converts, "the Holy Ghost came upon them, and they spake with tongues and prophesied," he wrought at Corinth as a tent-maker! Christ, as I have said elsewhere, did not claim exemption from the common condition of human nature; nay, a double portion of its painful and repulsive circumstances were assigned him; and if it was thus during his wondrous ministry, how passed his life during the thirty years preceding, when all except a favored

few believed him to be the carpenter's son, whose father and mother they knew? We find too, that it was when his servants were laboring in their appointed callings that God generally appeared to them, or communicated his designs. Moses was keeping his flock when the voice of the Lord came to him out of the burning bush; so were the shepherds when they heard those "glad tidings of great joy," that a Saviour was born in Bethlehem; and Gideon "threshed wheat by the wine-press, when the angel appeared and said unto him, The Lord is with thee."* For one prophet who was a lonely dweller in the wild, we read of many who lived in the world, maintaining fellowship with their brother men, and if the Spirit of God directed John the Baptist to sojourn in the wilderness, the same Spirit inquired of Elijah when hiding in Mount Horeb, "what doest

* "I doubt not but your hands are full of the employments of your particular calling, and it ought to be so in obedience to the will of God appointing you to it, and that the tempter may find you busy; but it is a good question you should be often putting to yourselves, Where is the *mind* now? They only are too busy who lose God in their business."—LETTER OF PHILIP HENRY TO TWO SERVANTS.

thou here?" You will not surely say that the individuals I have enumerated possessed no spirituality of mind; that their desires of heaven were few, their conception of its glories faint; yet should you object to the Old Testament saints, as confessedly living under an inferior dispensation, you cannot gainsay the example of St. Paul, and of the Saviour. The one esteemed it his "meat and drink to do the will of his Father," and the other was "in a strait, having a desire to depart and be with Christ:" yet they mingled in

"The common life our nature breeds."

After all, it is the soul that magnifies the Christian life; the soul that sheds its own truth and beauty over worldly avocations, the necessities of nature, and the requirement of society; that in its desires and aspirations can reach the tranquil and the boundless heaven, though the multitude of its thoughts may concern and be connected with the earth. Cannot the Christian do that by faith, which the poet effects by imagination? What dungeon ever chilled his inspiration? What chains ever fettered his genius? What close and continual contact with labor, and pain,

and poverty, and privation, ever pinioned the eagle of Parnassus? None. Did the burning sun of toil, or trial, ever dry up the fountain of song existent in the gushing depths of a poet's soul? Never. And shall the spirit of grace and glory, breathed into the Christian's heart by God himself, be less independent of time and circumstances than a faculty which hath no root in itself? than a merely visionary principle? Be just to the mind of man, do homage to the power of God, and you will be constrained to admit that the statesman, the soldier, the citizen, the man of many duties, the woman of many cares, the servant, nay, the very slave, may have his "conversation in heaven,"—his treasure there, his heart there, his eye there, whilst your fancied being of intellect and meditation shall be far beneath him in spirituality and in acceptance. Look once again at the only perfect character the world ever did, or ever will see. In the very nature of things, his mind was essentially, exquisitely contemplative. What similarity, what sympathy could exist between this wretched sinful world, and Him who came from the bosom

of the Father? He listened to the sounds of vanity and sin, with ears that had been filled with the melodies of seraphs; he beheld earth's loathsome spectacles with eyes yet beaming from the glories of heaven! When we paint Christ, when we write, and when we think of him, we imagine a being of pure, unmixed thought. Our fancy flies unconsciously to the gardens of antiquity, and depicts some philosophic sage, with the lineaments, but not the heart and habits of a man. But when we turn to his history, and read the description of him in his life, we are conscious of change, of contradiction, of disappointment. The Christ of the gospel is not the Christ of the human imagination. The simple phrase, he "went about doing good," destroys our air-built fancies in a moment; we find his being's law, his whole course of existence—active, practical.

And now, my dearest —, let us strive to learn the lessons suggested by these considerations; let us seek to realize, as well as acknowledge, the truth, that our life is simply a season of discipline, a period of probation. This world is only melancholy when we cease

to regard it as the vestibule to another. It is only dangerous when we are unwilling so to regard it. But the error of supposing it our sole dwelling-place, and our ultimate place of rest, is twined round the very fibres of the human heart : why else have we the anomaly of Christians overwhelmed with affliction ? of Christians puffed up in prosperity ? Let us beware next, that the world, in its best possessions, in "the grace of the glory of the fashion of it," does not bind us to its folly and its sin ; yet, withal, let us take heed that in our grief for its iniquities, we "sorrow not as those without hope." Even sorrow for sin "worketh death," if, in the place of energetic benevolence, it induce morbid, reckless melancholy. As a mourner said to a friend who wept, but did not speak, "weep words ;" so must we, in a world that lieth in wickedness, weep actions. "Is it," says God by his prophet Isaiah, "such a fast that I have chosen ? a day for a man to afflict his soul ? Is it to bow down his head as a bulrush, and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him ? wilt thou call this a fast and an acceptable day to the Lord ? Is not this the fast that I have chosen,

to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke? Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh! And if thou draw out thy soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul; then shall thy light rise in obscurity, and thy darkness be as the noon-day. And the Lord shall guide thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in drought, and make fat thy bones: and thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water whose waters fail not.”*

Admitting, my dear ——, that I have applied these verses by accommodation, they surely afford satisfactory proof, that he shall flourish most in his own soul, who is most active in the service of others.

And now I must bid you farewell. I have written to you at great length, but I have not written to you fully: I could make my

* Isaiah lviii. 5—7, 10, 11.

letter much longer, and still I should be dissatisfied. Meditate for yourself on these things; not for the mere pleasure of meditation, but that when your heart is enkindled by holy musing, you may be led to say, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to *do*?" I would not have you think less of heaven, only think soberly—be willing to labor in the vineyard, before you repose in Paradise. I cannot wish that your sun should go down at noon. My heart's desire and prayer for you more than almost any one beside, is, that long life and great grace may be given you, that you may manifest, by continued consistency of conduct, the reality of the principles you now profess; that you may be the means of cheering and strengthening many of your fellow-creatures; of leading little ones in the way to Zion, of teaching them what God has enabled others to teach you. Rest not satisfied with being safe and happy yourself; every effort to render others so will strengthen that safety, will increase that happiness.

Again, my love, farewell. May it be a triumphant, though a far distant day, wherein you shall be summoned to the land, for which

even now you long. May you then be enabled to say, without a moment's doubt, "It is finished! my life finished! my work finished! my offending and sorrowing finished! All is finished, except those holy joys, which will enter with me into heaven, there to be perfected, there to increase and abide for ever!"

Believe me ever

Most affectionately yours.

LETTER XXV.

MY DEAR —,

MELANCHOLY, and melancholy fancies, form, I grant, part and parcel of every reflective and poetical mind; and cheerfulness, I am further willing to grant, is at times the most difficult of duties;—but I must also humbly submit, that a part ought not to be put for the whole, and that a difficult duty often yields the richest harvest of satisfaction. Life abounds, I will not say in happiness, so much as in materials for happiness; but then as these materials are at once common and common-place, a young, untamed, imaginative mind is prone to think melancholy a far finer thing. I would not ridicule such a mind's affecting sad fancies, because it is almost always done in the first instance with uncon-

sciousness of the subtle and evil tendencies of the habit. I can hardly say the same of a mind brought to maturity, surrounded with opportunities of exertion, and aware of the stern and varied trials that press upon most of the human beings that surround us.

But to treat the subject in a literary sense, as you would prefer it treated; we *must* cast off the trammels of melancholy fancies: they spoil poetry—they do what is infinitely worse, they spoil the tone of character, and enervate the understanding. To connect, as necessarily inseparable, beauty and sorrow, love and death, mirth and melancholy, may give a momentary and superficial grace to our style of thought; but, independent of moral ill effects, it tends to prevent expansion of thought and vigor of imagination. Yes, the best poet will habitually sing “a holy and a cheerful note;” the highest philosopher will not limit himself to sarcastic portraiture of what we all see and suffer from—“man’s disobedience and the fall;” he will dwell upon another fact that we are less willing to bear in mind—that if the ore of human nature requires to be cast from furnace to

furnace, a great Refiner is sitting by, intent to purify and prepare for glorious uses, the very treasure that we might often fancy destroyed. The highest philosopher will carefully enunciate, that discipline is not destruction; that mournful facts and saddening truths are only part, and that an elementary part, of what we are called upon to believe and feel; that it is our wisdom to look through all these things, and cherish an unfaltering remembrance and undying trust, that God is every where and at all times occupied in educating good out of evil, the very evil we deplore. So let us journey on, "humbly yet undismayed;" and besides all richer benefits, our intellectual creations will become statelier, and stronger, and less unworthy of name and fame.

But to go a step further. Melancholy consists quite as much in pride as refinement; in the pride of despising trivial sources of enjoyment, as in the refinement which is keenly susceptible of trivial annoyances. A person striving to construct happiness out of daily life, strongly resembles one of the smaller tribe of birds constructing its nest.

The materials for this nest are in themselves mean and worthless—here a feather, there a straw—yonder a spray of moss—and on that thorn a tuft of wool: *we* despise or overlook them, but the bird, wise and patient in the providential instinct of its nature, sees differently, and confounds by its actions both man and his reasoning. It collects the small, contemned materials, arranges them, and, when arranged, the feather, the straw, the moss, and the wool, having lost their separate insignificance, form part of a beautiful whole, of a tiny but perfect fabric. Just so let us not despise trifles—any trifle at least, by means of which an innocent gratification may either be imparted or received,—and we shall find an aggregate of pleasure. The kind look or word that occupies but a moment, may, by its influence on the spirits, gladden a whole day; five minutes' conversation with a stranger accidentally met, may embody some information that we were previously ignorant of, or suggest some valuable train of thought that might not otherwise have arisen.

A habit of rendering and of being pleased with the minor charities and courtesies of

life, which Milton calls "the thousand de-cencies" that flow from words and actions, has a vast influence upon happiness. Every graceful observance, or yet more graceful forbearance, may seem separately as unimportant as a grain of sand; but taken in the accumulation of a whole life, they resemble the body of "sand upon the sea-shore"—a barrier to the fury of an ocean. There is pride in despising to enjoy trifles when they lie in our path, and only ask us to pick them up:—there is folly too—for enrapturing pleasures come but seldom, and even then exhaust rather than strengthen the mind:—and there is even sin—for the little enjoyments despised are often especially prepared for us by God. There is pride—for man, regarded only in this world, is, with all his boasting, nothing better than a solemn trifle himself. There is folly—for he knows not how soon sickness or affliction may incapacitate him for taking pleasure in every thing, in what he terms great no less than in what he considers little. There is sin—for the things disregarded are often perfect, whilst those desired are more or less alloyed. A gratified ambition cannot

often arise to gratify us, and when it does, it mainly gratifies our earthly feelings; but the sudden sight of a bank of wild flowers, an unexpected strain of music, the loving laugh of a child, a thousand natural and small delights, can afford the soul a momentary triumph over its baser companion, by inspiring love without passion, by shedding as it were a dew over feelings scorched by the world, and by exciting for innocent gladness that healthy sympathy which of itself maketh glad. Solomon, in Ecclesiastes, speaks with bitterness of all the great pleasures that he had made and found—his success, his pomp, his possessions, his fame, even his knowledge; but he never speaks a word against simple natural pleasures—"Truly," saith he, "the light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun."

I am well, too well aware, that when all is said and done, many minds will remain essentially sad-thoughted; minds gifted with moral second-sight, to whom the surface of every thing lies bare, and whose present is darkened by the shadows of the future. There will always be too much melancholy in the

world, and in the world itself too much occasion for melancholy. Wherever there is thought, there must be sadness; but there is no need to seek after it as a luxury, respect it as a virtue, or consider it a proof of genius. The sadness of a profound philosopher, and the pensiveness of a very young poet, are extraordinarily different: one will probably lead to ameliorating effort—the other as probably only expand in a simile or expire in a sigh. Let me entreat *you*, dear —, not to be as many years as I was in finding out the very simple but useful truth—that *trifling enjoyments are not always trivial*; it is a truth that neighbors closely on that which proclaims the importance of trifling duties; the recognition of one involves the other. Adieu, and strive to be cheerful.

LETTER XXVI.

MY DEAR —,

I SHOULD scarcely have volunteered to write you “a serious letter,” but your having made the request renders the occupation pleasant. As you leave the subject to me, I will arrange a few remarks on the influence and non-influence of Christianity, written some time since, and which, if not very profound, will to your partial eyes have merit in being my own, and interest in being now addressed to yourself.

On comparing, then, the state of the world in its heathen and in its converted days, I think our first involuntary reflection is—“How much”—and our second, “How little has it been amended by Christianity!” The progress of civilization, and the better under-

stood relations of society, have, independent of religion, softened and beautified the aspect of the world, just as the morning mist gives apparent softness and beauty to the rock round which it hangs:—but as the rock is really hard and barren at the very time of its seeming loveliness, so the moral condition of our species is in reality just what it ever was. • In our intercourse with each other there may be many graces that did not exist in ruder ages, more of decorum, more of gentleness, of courtesy, and of restrained passion; but the human HEART remains unchanged, still the heart from which by nature proceed evil thoughts and evil deeds. Man in a state of civilization may be likened to a draped savage; we are no longer shocked by the display of wild nakedness or ferocious strength; but the external covering, however gay or graceful, has wrought no change in his hidden man. In heart he is a savage still. If to civilization we suppose the addition of mental acquirements, we can no longer term the being before us a savage; he reflects as well as observes; he governs by mind rather than by brute force; no longer

limited to a few, and those ungovernable feelings, his sensibilities become refined, and are not only many but various. No longer confined within the mean circle of the present, he questions the past, and anticipates the future; contented no more with animal enjoyments, he connects the meanest with intellectual exercises, and lives and moves in the glorious world of thought, won and peopled by himself. The savage has grown into a poet and a philosopher; nevertheless, with all this wondrous change, the heart remains precisely as it did—the fountain of evil thoughts and evil deeds, though shut up perhaps more carefully in its source, mingled, it may be, with much that sweetens its bitterness.

Suppose now religion, the religion of the Scriptures, to claim the right of operating on the being that has already gone through two changes; this religious change is not, as might be expected, from the greatness of the principle, sudden and startling; yet is it the change paramount, since it changes what physical civilization and moral cultivation had left untouched—the heart. Without removing a single passion, religion alters their

operation by simply giving them a new direction ; leaving actions and externals to themselves, it grapples with motives and principles ; it is the lever that raises the otherwise immovable weight, the Prometheus that wakes the dead form into life ;—to waive mechanical and pagan metaphor, it is the Spirit of God moving over a spiritual chaos, and evoking from its bosom, beauty, order, and life. It reveals that our present existence has an end ulterior to present enjoyment, and that an authority exists greater than any cognizable by mortals. It tells the creature of a Creator ; the sinner of a Redeemer ; the immortal of eternity ; the entire man, however exalted by circumstances, of one supreme master. It says, without condition and without compromise, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God ;" and to render compliance with such demand practicable, it says also, "The Lord thy God hath loved thee."

It may be pleasant, but it is not therefore true, to speak of the perpetual progress of our nature, of the advancements of literature and society, in such a way as might lead the unwary to imagine, that if Christianity

is an influence highly desirable, it is not one absolutely indispensable; that the Scriptures, religious observances, and even the Spirit of grace itself, are less causes than corollaries of whatsoever is excellent and interesting in the character and history of man. A principle of progression undoubtedly exists in human nature, and classic records render it difficult to assign its limits. Before the coming of Christ, man had certainly proved that he could civilize and refine himself; that without any knowledge of the one true God, he could raise himself into "a high and palmy state" of natural and intellectual glory. But the question lies with the heart, with that on which no exterior agency can produce a spiritual and Christianizing effect. Allowing, then, the greatest possible latitude as to time and advantageous circumstances, should we even by this period have beheld a single human being spontaneously exhibiting Christian ethics, had there been no knowledge of Christian doctrines? How was a taste for them to be acquired? How was it to be seen that good would result from their practice? When, and by whom, were they to be esteemed

and rewarded, counteracting, as many of them would, the whole course of human opinion? Who had power to command the exercise of such as were painful? Who had a sufficiency from which to furnish a recompense?—It is an anomaly to suppose that any single human being could, that any single human being would, live the Christian's life unsustained by the Christian's hope. "If," says one of its first champions—"If in this life only we have hope, we are of all men most miserable."

It may be objected, that in the present era we do see this anomaly realized, that it *now* seems possible to evidence the graces peculiar to Christianity, without professing any love for Christianity itself; and in one sense this really is the case. No man, without the Spirit of God in his heart, can in the sight of God take rank as a Christian, though in the sight of his fellow-men he may seem imbued with the very essence of religious faith; but still the glory of this triumph redounds to God, and not to man. By that revelation of himself which has been extant nearly two thousand years, divine currency has been given to certain virtues, divine opprobrium

has been stamped on certain evils, divine authority has been affixed to certain habits and opinions which were neither current, nor opprobrious, nor authorized in pagan days. This new legislation has, in Christendom at least, been long recognized; publicly, affecting the constructing of laws—privately, imbuing individual minds; mingling with the events of time, and governing the usages of society, in a manner none the less real because silent and habitual. The freethinker would doubtless spurn the idea of being indebted to Christianity for the virtues on which he prides himself—but such is the fact. He may affect to practise them from the abstract love of high morality, or from regard to the opinions of society; but where, except where Christianity is recognized, does there exist such morality to love, or a state of society entertaining such opinions? Even a child educated on mere worldly principles, unconsciously partakes of the blessings of Christianity. He may be taught to be honest, because it is the best policy; to be courteous, because a winning deportment is a passport to fortune; to speak the truth, because it is

honorable; he may be taught virtue on wrong principles: but still, he has the advantage arising from good conduct, society has the benefit of his example, and the virtuous aspect of society is so much homage rendered to the religion which first required it. Even were Christianity wholly removed from the world, were its records and temples everywhere destroyed, its rites and observances rendered nugatory, its *influence* would long linger behind, like the gleaming in the west left by the departed sun. One cannot conceive of any time short of ages, sufficient entirely to obliterate the memory of those usages and opinions which once rendered the lands they overspread so prosperous and so fair.

It is thus that the wisdom of God provides for the well-being even of those who withhold their homage from HIM, rendering the very principle they despise or neglect, a means of securing to them the blessings they most value. It is this which induces the second reflection of "How little has the world improved under the influence of Christianity!" Looking beyond the surface of society, look-

ing with a spiritual eye at the religion which, as emanating from God, has reference to thoughts, motives, and desires, and is intended to approximate man to the purity of his Maker, we sigh even amidst its triumphs, great and many as they are. We are compelled to see that Christianity is not enshrined in the hearts of men in general, and we know that it is the religion of the heart. Even when enthroned in the soul, we perceive its sway broken by rebellions, and we know that it is the religion of supremacy. We hail it abstractedly as a principle of power, strength, glory and consolation;—we know it would be our champion against all adversities, and maintain for us perpetual communion with God; that it would be to us a spirit of holiness and peace, teaching the songs of heaven even amidst the labors of earth; drying our tears, stilling our sighs, and so hallowing our whole lives, that “God with us” would be in very truth our motto; and “always rejoicing” indeed the record of our pilgrimage. But we are false to this mighty principle within us; we are traitors, and league with our enemies, therefore is

Christianity wounded even in the house of its friends! Alas for others! and alas for our own selves!

With real anxiety for your happiness, with yet more for your safety; and praying that "the armor of righteousness" may be both on your "right hand and on your left," so that fiery darts and subtle temptations may alike be withstood through the blended power and goodness of God, believe me,

Ever yours.

LETTER XXVII.

MY DEAR —,

YOU are mistaken in supposing, that by writing so much concerning the Old Testament, and by expressing so much enthusiasm in it as a book, I look more coldly than I ought on the perfections of the New. I would gladly obey your wishes, and write at length on its beauty and its truth; but it is no task to be occupied in haste, forming a parenthesis between light or common occupations. It affords, too, less scope for literary imagination, by being more direct, explanatory, and spiritual; by embodying in precept what the older sacred books conveyed in metaphor; by demanding to be read more simply, and by setting forth doctrine and sentiment, rather than history and example.

And yet I am wrong :—there is in the New Testament one example, one piece of history, that comprises in itself all of divine, lovely, and heroic scattered even over the Bible—that brings to my mind the fine saying of him who wanted “no Christianity but the character of Christ.” Instruction in the Old Testament is gorgeous and awful ; it glows in the jewelled breastplate of the high-priest—speaks in thunder—and is felt in thick darkness ;—miracle, prophecy, and portent, attend it on its way “conquering and to conquer ;”—its evidences startle the senses—they are gigantic fragments, perfect only when built into the true temple of the person of Christ—glorious hieroglyphics, of which Christ is the interpretation. Embodying its predictions—developing its commands—the root and the offspring—the beginning and the end—the first and the last—the true wonder of the universe—the “great mystery of godliness”—the marvel even of the Scriptures—the unimagined and the unimaginable, is the character of Christ ! In this world man will never fully comprehend that character ; whilst young he will hardly be able to admire it.

The audacity of spirit that believes all things possible to strength of will, must be worn down by frequent contests with moral obstacles, and frequent failures of success ; that confidence in the powers of others which exists long after we have ceased to confide in our own, must have yielded to that hesitation which is the growth of experience ;—we must have studied our species in history, in daily life, and in our own hearts ; sorrow, too, must have dimmed the brightness of our hopes, disappointment have checked our anticipations, humility have in some measure superseded pride, and submission have dethroned rebellion ;—the affections must in some degree have been detached from the world, and incline at least towards things heavenly ; the understanding must have acquired a leading love of truth, the imagination of simplicity, and the whole soul of what is essentially divine—before we shall be able to wonder aright at the only perfect character the universe ever saw.

We never expect in man a perfect union of opposite powers and pursuits ; but the first thing that strikes us in the character of

Christ, is the harmony of its contradictions. We do not from a sage expect martial heroism, nor from an imaginative man great love of business; sensibility and self-command are not qualities that naturally go hand in hand; the virtues which are illustrated in suffering are oftener found alone than in conjunction with those indicative of great mental energy, and productive of active and daring exertion. We expect, and we find, individual excellences in every style of character—excellences which we are accustomed to regard as discriminate signs of a peculiar cast of mind; but we never expect to find a character uniting all these signs, and the slightest approximation to such an union strikes us with admiration. The perfect balance of all the intellectual and moral powers was only witnessed in Jesus of Nazareth, and the result was perfection. No virtue outgrew its fellow; no duty trenched on its opposite; there was a constant parallelism between principles and their application. Every moral claim was satisfied as it arose; every hour brought some new duty, and the same hour saw its fulfilment. Such a system, presented, at one

and the same time, an aspect both simple and complicated. To bear reproof and to administer it; to submit and to command; to speak as one having authority, yet be very gracious; to seek the multitude, yet shun popularity—and respect the station of the great, yet rebuke their crimes; to unite ascetic habits with social feelings; to view the darkest exhibitions of human prejudice and human sin with indignation and yet with patience; to be wronged and possess all power, yet so far from seeking revenge, to feel no resentment; to pass with equal fidelity and grace through publicity and retirement, ministering to thousands and turning aside for one; to know the world in all its baseness, yet retain fervent charity for its sorrows; unceasingly to baffle fraud, yet never to deviate from truth:—such were the contrarieties required by the DIVINE HUMANITY. Essential knowledge, yet never swerving from simplicity; essential power, yet never moved to vengeance; essential love, yet never swayed by feeling;—such was Christ.

My dear —, may he not only be our Redeemer, but our pattern.

Yours ever.

THE LOST SPIRIT.

"No man cared for my soul"—PSALM cxlii. 4.

WEEP, Sire, with shame and ruing,
Weep for thy child's undoing!
For the days when I was young,
And no prayer was taught my tongue;
Nor the record from on high,
Of the life that cannot die:
Wiles of the world and men—
Of their threescore years and ten;
Earthly profit—human praise,
Thou didst set before my gaze,
As the guiding stars of life,
As the meed of toil and strife;
I ran the world's race well,
And find my guerdon—HELL!

Weep, Mother, weep—yet know
'Twill not shorten endless wo,
Nor thy prayer unbind my chain,
Thy repentance soften pain,
Nor the life-blood of thy frame,
For one moment quench this flame!
Weep not beside my tomb,
That is gentle, painless gloom;
Let the worm and darkness prey
On my senseless slumbering clay;
Weep for the priceless gem
That may not hide with them;
Weep the lost spirit's fate,
Yet know thy tears too late:—
Had they sooner fallen—well,
I had not wept in HELL!

Physician, canst thou weep?
Then let tears thy pillow steep:
Couldst thou view Time's nearing wave,
Doomed to whelm me in its grave;
The last and lessening space,
My life's brief hour of grace,

Yet with gay, unfaltering tongue,
Promise health and sojourn long?
On the brink of that profound
Without measure, depth, or bound,
View me busied with the toys
Of a world of shadowy joys?
Oh, had look, or sign, or breath,
Then whispered aught of death;
Though nature in the strife,
Had loosed her hold on life,
And the worm received its prey
Perchance an earlier day—

 This—this—and who can tell
 That I had dwelt in HELL!

False Prophet, flattering Priest,
Full fraught with mirth and feast!
Thy weeping should not fail
But with life's dark-ended tale!
For the living—for the dead—
There is guilt upon thy head!
Thou didst make the "narrow way,"
As the broad one, smooth and gay;
So speak in accents bland
Of the bright and better land,
That the soul unchanged within,
The sinner in his sin,
Of God and Christ unshriven,
Lay down with dreams of heaven!—
 False Priest, thy labors tell,
 I dreamed—and woke in HELL!

THE END.

